



Secret Memoirs  
OF THE  
Courts of Europe  
FROM THE  
16TH TO THE 19TH CENTURY  
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VOLUME VIII

# Imperial Edition

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SECRET MEMOIRS



**The Court of Berlin**

VOLUME II



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*HONORÉ-GABRIEL RIQUETTI, COMTE DE  
MIRABEAU*

*From a pastel by Michel-Honoré Bounieu*

SECRET MEMOIRS  
OF THE  
COURTS OF EUROPE

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*The Court of Berlin*

BY  
COUNT MIRABEAU

IN TWO VOLUMES  
VOL. II

ILLUSTRATED

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THE  
SECRET HISTORY  
OF THE  
COURT OF BERLIN

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LETTER XLIII

*November 4th, 1786.*

A NEW letter, excessively rigorous, and tolerably incoherent, has suspended Launay in the exercise of all his functions. Yet I scarcely can believe it is intended to sully the beginning of a reign by useless cruelty. The victim is immolated to the nation the moment the man is no longer in place. The remainder would only be the explosion of gratuitous hatred, since the unfortunate Launay no longer can give umbrage to anyone. Verder is placed at the head of the customs. We shall see what the new established order will produce; or rather, whether they will

know how to establish any new order. In the meantime the discharge of forty Frenchmen is determined on, *in petto*. But I cannot perceive that these kind of Sicilian vespers are likely even to gain the public favour. The theatre here is not sufficiently vast to conceal from the pit what is passing behind the scenes. There is scarcely any illusion possible, except that of actually doing good. I shall endeavour to save Launay, by causing Prince Henry to say, who has at least preserved the privilege of uttering all he pleases, that hitherto the King has really acted in this business as the man of the nation; but that, should he go farther, he will become the man of the persecutors of Launay; that there are public murmurs which affirm he has espoused their hatred, &c. Certain it is that the repetition of the self-important *I*, in Launay's estimate, has put the King out of humour, and even in a passion.

His Majesty arrived yesterday, and returned this morning. This seems to be an episode in the romance of Voss which approaches the dénouement, and which is suspended to obtain the

three following articles:—Two hundred thousand crowns for her portion. The King refuses (or will only count out a thousand crowns per month, so that the payment will not be completed in less than sixteen years and eight months, which will render the sum a little problematic); a left-handed marriage (to this he consents, but the lady finds that a very equivocal kind of circumstance), or to marry her to a man who shall depart on the bridal day as ambassador to Sweden (there is no certainty of finding a man sufficiently base, in that class which should rank him among ambassadors). Miss avows that, without being amorous, she is rendered exceedingly sensible by a three years' siege. But what shall become of her?—of her uncle?—her family? What place shall she hold in the public opinion, in city, and Court? Such is the purport of the negotiation conducted by Bishopswerder. I do not suppose him young enough to be the King's substitute; so that the speculation does not appear to be very certain.

As to the King, there is, indeed, some little curiosity, a degree of obstinacy, and somewhat of vanity, but still greater want of a companion with



whom he may be as much of a gossip, may loll, and dress as slovenly as he pleases. The circumstance that shackles the negotiation is that Rietz and her tribe must evacuate the country, and the King is exceedingly attached to her son. It is necessary, however, to add to all this that Mademoiselle Voss relates herself all the tales repeated in public, and even of the most secret courtiers, which concern herself; and this may render the probability of these conjectures suspicious.

The King, it is said, returns to Potsdam till the 8th. He is not there so entirely occupied by business or secret pleasure as to exclude all company. Mr. Arnim is one of his society; a kind of unfinished man of the world, who has acquired many friends by the affability and amenity of his manners and his great fortune, and whose understanding, sufficiently upright and little brilliant, being timid and wavering, neither gives umbrage to the King nor inspires him with fears. In all despotic countries, one grand means of good fortune is mediocrity of talents. If it be generally true that no positive assertions ought to be made in the presence of princes, and that hesitation

and deliberation always please them, I think it peculiarly so applied to Frederick William II.

It is affirmed the assignments are made out, and that this has been the labour of Welner alone. For this reason all the ministers, Schulemburg excepted (perhaps because of his connections with Count Finckenstein, whom the inauguration of Mademoiselle Voss must render powerful), are restless and terrified. Some of them have not yet given in the least account to the King. Estimate by this the state of a country in which everything depends on the industry of the King. Be not astonished that so little mention is made of business, for no business is transacted; the affair of Launay is the only one which is pursued with activity and hatred; everything else slumbers.

A person who comes from Russia assures me that the Empress has long omitted going any more to the senate, and that she habitually intoxicates herself every morning with Champagne and Hungary wine (this is contradictory to every account I have hitherto received); that Potemkin elevates his ambition to the grandest projects, and that it is openly affirmed he will

either be made Emperor or be beheaded, at the accession of the Grand Duke. This artful and decisive man, possessed of uncommon fortitude, has not a single friend; and yet the number of his creatures and creditors, who with him would lose their all, is so great in every class of the people, that his party is extremely formidable. He amasses immense treasures, in a country where everything is venal. Accustomed never to pay his debts, and disposing of everything in Russia, he does not find any difficulty in accumulating enormous sums. He has an apartment, the key of which he keeps himself, partitioned out from top to bottom, and divided into a great number of boxes, filled with bank bills of Russia, Denmark, and particularly of Holland and England. A person in his employment proposed the purchase of a library to him, appertaining to a great lord that had lately died. Potemkin took him into his bank bill apartment, where the only answer he made was asking whether he imagined this library was of equal value with the one proposed. Possessed of such pecuniary aid, he has no need of any other to

perform whatever he shall dare to undertake at Petersburg.

I must here mention that Doctor Roggerson, who yesterday departed on his return to Petersburg, affirms that no person in Europe leads a more sober and regular life than Catherine II. He, however, has been eight months absent.

I have collected some particulars that are rather curious, relative to the usurpation made on the ducal rights of postage in Courland, of which I have spoken to you in my former despatches. This is an object of some importance, in so small a state; independent of the inquisition that thence results, and of the infraction of the rights of nations. This branch of revenue does not annually amount to less than a hundred and sixty thousand livres. But the following is a singular circumstance, which characterises Russian politics.

Not to commit an act of violence too openly, and to avoid marching troops, which always draws the attention of neighbouring Powers, the Court of Russia proposed, or rather demanded, an amicable conference between the deputies of Courland and commissaries, named to that effect; and appointed

their sittings to be at Riga, a Russian fortress on the frontiers of Courland, under the presidency of the Governor of that town. Four deputies from Courland repaired thither at the time appointed; and the Governor signified to them that he had received orders from his Sovereign to arrest them, if they did not sign an act, which he produced ready drawn up, by which the ducal rights of the postage of Courland were transferred to Russia. The deputies, should they refuse, having no other prospect before their eyes but Siberia, purely and simply affixed their signatures: after this, several stipulations, which alienated lesser rights and even portions of the borders of Courland, were in like manner presented and sanctioned. One of the most artful, and the most important, of these stipulations is that which relates to reclaiming the subjects of Russia, who may be found in Courland, and in which the Cabinet of Petersburg have included the very descendants of those who may have been naturalized for ages. It is very evident that this concession leads to unlimited abuse, and innumerable disputes, which will be more injurious to Courland than the most burden-

some tax could be; for nothing can prevent the Russian superintendents from feigning, whenever they please, the existence of one or of several of such or such Russian subjects, in such or such a part of Courland, or from taking the refusal of restitution for granted, in order to lay the country under the contribution of an equal number of hundreds of ducats (the sum fixed by the stipulation for each Muscovite whom the Courlanders shall refuse to deliver up), whenever the Russian treasury, or the Russian delegate, shall stand in need of, or whenever the country shall be enabled to pay, such sums of money. I again repeat that similar practices, openly in Courland, in other parts more secretly, similar projects I say, are carried on in all the countries that border upon Russia. Let us return to Berlin.

Trumpel, the groom whom I mentioned to you in my last, is discharged. This exertion has excited much astonishment. The King certainly rouses himself as much as he can, that he may not be governed, and this is the most distinct act of self-will which has hitherto been discernable in the Monarch.

On Thursday evening he supped at the confidential table, at which there are no servants, but the guests are supplied by *Tours*.<sup>1</sup> The supper was more than gay. Ten persons were present. When it was over, the ladies of honour were visited, one after the other.

Prince Henry, who has this week given grand dinners to the civil and military officers of the Court, a thing he never did before, supped on Monday with the reigning Queen and her whole Court. This proves nothing, except a desire to keep up the appearance of politeness. I forgot to say that he is to give a dinner to-morrow to all the subalterns of the regiment of Braun. This is gratuitous and ridiculous affectation, and will never make his peace with the army, by which he is truly despised.

Baron Bagge, after refusing to pay any visits here, even those that common decorum required, saying that, according to the manner in which he had lived with the Heir-Apparent, it was for the

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<sup>1</sup> Dumb-waiters, or rather a kind of machinery, of French invention, made to ascend through the floor, or pass through apertures in the wall, that the unobserved guests may indulge in the most detestable licentiousness.

King to send him an invitation, vesterday received this invitation to Potsdam. The incident proves that music still is a passion.

That infamous C—— has written to Chauvier, affirming that he knew, past all dispute, it was to him he was indebted for the obligation of not being permitted to see the King; that he was going into a country in which he should find it easy to injure; and that he would use every exertion to effect his ruin; exclusive of the means with which he had been furnished by Chauvier himself. Chauvier has acted with propriety, and laid the letter before the King.

The nocturnal jaunts continue. I still remain ignorant of the object of the grand motions toward Austria, and reciprocally.



## LETTER XLIV

*November 7th, 1786.*

THE King himself has interfered to produce a reconciliation between Bishopswerder and Goltz, the Tartar. Peace for the present, therefore, is concluded; and the more firmly, because that war, open and avowed, is hotly carried on between the first favourite and Count Goertz. There has been great difficulty in preventing them coming to blows. What may be argued of a King for whom they thus openly contend? Probably a regiment will be given to Goertz to send him out of the way; but the payment of his debts is the difficulty, for it appears that the last thing the King will part with is money. The treatment of the aides-de-camp is at length determined on. Bishopswerder has two thousand crowns; Goltz, the Tartar, and Bowlet each seventeen hundred. The head groom, Lindenau, also has two thousand crowns, with eight places of forage, which may be estimated

at six hundred crowns, and fire and candle.— Behold how the sandy plains of Brandenburg, with the aid of Silesia, be it understood, are capable of maintaining an army of two hundred thousand men.

The thermometer of business remains still at the same fixed point. There is no riddance of letters; one chamber is full of packets that remain unopened. The state minister Zedlis has not been able to obtain an answer to his reports for more than three weeks. Everything is in arrear. Yet the mode of living at Potsdam appears to have been tolerably well regulated, though Madam Rietz has been there. The latest hour that the King has risen at has been six o'clock. The Prince of Dessau has never seen him before half-past twelve, and perhaps not half an hour each day, dinner-time excepted. It is at supper that the women make their appearance, and that wrinkled cares are discarded.

Welner has not quitted Potsdam, and two men are continually writing in his apartment. Hitherto he may be regarded as the monarch of domestic affairs. That he is neither deficient in

talents nor information is a point undisputed; and the eternal disorder of the accounts, added to suspicion of the financiers in power, must have impelled the King to have abandoned himself wholly to Welner, whose obscurity is his recommendation.

I say the *eternal disorder*; because that in effect Frederick William I., with whom all domestic regulations originated, and in which no alterations were made by his son, kept no general and exact accounts; and acted thus systematically. Being acquainted himself with the whole of his affairs, as he would not suffer any one of his ministers to divine what the state of them was, he made out imperfect, over-charged, and false accounts. Frederick II., who never understood anything of finance, but who very well knew that money is the basis of all power, confined his views to the amassing of large sums; and he was so certain that his savings were enormous that he was satisfied with partial accounts. Such an interpretation is certainly more probable, in my opinion, than the imputation of having burnt the general state of debtor and

creditor, with the malicious intention of embarrassing his successor. The present King wishes for order, and he has reason so to do ; but it is an Augean stable, and I see no Hercules ; at least, among those by whom he intends to be served.

Count Finckenstein has written in very warm terms to the King, to inform him that the provocations of Count Hertzberg are so frequent that they are become insupportable ; and that his great age and his last illness made him sincerely desirous of retreat. The King returned a very mild answer, very obliging, and what may be called apologetic ; in which he earnestly requested him to remain in office, and promised that the cause of his complaints should cease. He promised, perhaps, more than he can perform. Men of the most opposite tempers served together under Frederick II., and this is one of the characteristic traits of his reign. But it is no small presumption to imitate his manner ; it cannot be expected that such imitation should succeed ; for, in spite of the servility of the country, liberties are taken that were not permitted under the late King, of whom the

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world spoke very freely, but with whom no person was familiar. The very Academicians now make encroachments. Three new members have been proposed—one Boden, an astronomer; one Meierotto, the rector of a college; and one Ancillon, a minister of the holy Gospel. Admirable choice! The King testified his surprise with asperity, at this unusual proposition, made without its being even known whether he did or did not intend to increase the number of Academicians. The indiscretion will probably occasion some regulation. He has, however, signed a large YES to the proposal for I know not what Druid of the name of Erman, author of a multitude of vile sermons, and a refugee history, of which four volumes are already written, that might be reduced to thirty pages; and who has been proposed by the curator only, Count Hertzberg, without the question having been put to the vote.

The Boden of Paris seems to be forgotten, or worse. The King was told that he had written three letters to his Majesty without having received any answer. "I have no answer

to give; the fellow came here without orders.”<sup>1</sup> Such was the royal decision! The King returns to-morrow for a few days. He has been so accustomed to run from place to place, and to make only a momentary stay, that the habit seems to have become one of his wants. M. de H—— wrote to him, three days ago, to know when he might take his leave, but has received no answer.

The grand dinner of Prince Henry to the regiment of Braun was given yesterday, as I before wrote. All the officers and forty subalterns, who had served under him at the battle of Prague, sat at the Prince's table. He gave a medal worth fifteen ducats to each officer, a ducat to each subaltern, and a crown to each private. It would be difficult to be more awkwardly ostentatious. Had there been any need to have further injured himself in the King's opinion, he could not have found a better method; but this was completely done before, and it must be well known too, for Roggerson,

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<sup>1</sup> *C'est un f—u coquin, qui est venu sans ordre.* There is no translating the St. Giles's eloquence of this phrase.



who had often visited Prince Henry during his two journeys into Russia, has not been to pay him his respects. The King gave him an audience, it is said, but only for a few moments.

I do not at this instant recollect the name of the person who is arrived from Vienna, and who at the King's table was very pleasant at the Emperor's expense, which occasioned a coolness in the King and some gloominess, so as to denote marks of disapprobation—silent, but strong.

The new ribbands are preparing. Moral coin seems to cost the King least. Never was the remark of Frederick II. to Pritwitz more true than at present. The latter complained that the ribband had been bestowed on Braun before himself.—“My ribband,” said the King, “is like saving grace; it may be given, cannot be merited.”

Count Arnim has been appointed master of the hounds and a minister of state, with a vote and a seat in the grand directory. In one of my former despatches I have spoken of him circumstantially. This is a pure choice of favour (and is the more marked because that the place of master of the hounds, taken from Schulemburg,

had continually been solicited by Colonel Stein, who was rather in the King's good graces), but of favour founded, as I imagine, merely on the pleasure taken in the company of Arnim, who is irreproachable in mind and manners. It is only another person of incapacity added to the ministry.

*Rotten before ripe.* Such I greatly fear will be the motto of the Prussian power. But their millions are good. It will, therefore, be of use to remit new propositions for a loan, if it be really intended to erect a bank, as all packets, gazettes, and private letters affirm, so that, myself excepted, everybody is informed of the project; for in my opinion these would be of more importance than the loan of a hundred and twenty-five millions, which the bank apparently will be able to borrow on its own credit. Struensee, who doubtless will be glad of this occasion of rendering himself useful to the King, has in plain terms asked what he is to think of the disorder of the Caisse d'Escompte; of the letter of the Comptroller General to his administrators; of the project of a bank; of its approaching realization; of the principles on which it is to be established; and especially what kind

of directors shall have the management. He thinks the plan good, but is convinced that everything depends on those who shall have the direction. To all these questions, as you must be sensible, I know not what to reply; yet it is requisite I should soon know, because that, not to mention that any negotiation of this kind cannot succeed here except by his aid, for not one of the others understands anything of such affairs, he has a right to interrogate me since I made the first advances.

## LETTER XLV

*November 20th, 1786.*

UNFORTUNATELY, I cannot be blind to what is here daily confirmed by traits which are each more pitiable than the other, concerning the opinion that I have so long forborne to take of the man and of affairs.

The King has just bestowed the riband of the Black Eagle on Anhalt. This gentleman is the son of a cook-maid, and of a multitude of fathers. He was originally a groom; he next sold smuggled coffee to the officers. I know not by what means he became what he is, but I know that his principal function was that of a spy. He was afterwards placed in the service of the present King while Prince of Prussia; and, as he mingled poisonous advice and odious tales, *they* destined him, as it is said (and the word *they* is in this case the most bitter of the enemies of the late King), to execute a crime which *they* neither had

the address to colour nor the courage to consummate. Anhalt possesses more military talents than his native folly could promise. His warlike vocation seems to be remarkable by this singular characteristic, that he never possesses coolness except when heading his men. He has arrived, whether by these or other means, at the rank of lieutenant-general. As he is without understanding (the little he had he was deprived of by a dreadful fall, for which he was obliged to be trepanned), he continued in favour. He was detested at Königsberg, where he commanded, and this was a kind of recommendation to him at Potsdam, where the kingdom endured forty-six years of disgrace.<sup>1</sup>

Some days before the King's death, General Anhalt was sent for to Sans-Souci. "You have lately married one of your daughters," said the King.—"Yes, Sire, I feel I have."—"How much did you give with her?"—"Ten thousand crowns."—"That is a large sum for you, who have nothing." On the morrow they were sent him

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<sup>1</sup> By the kingdom, Prussia Royal is meant, for which province the late King had a fixed aversion.

by the King. Anhalt returned into Prussia. His benefactor died; he beheaded his portrait, and substituted the head of his successor. The new King repairs to Königsberg to receive homage, and bestows a superb box on Anhalt; but, indeed, gives him notice he must quit the government of Prussia in two months' time, that is to say, at present. Anhalt, being at an auction some days since and seeing a portrait of the late King sold at a low price, very coolly said, "Right, I'll give you the other<sup>1</sup> into the bargain." He retires with a pension of five thousand crowns, a riband, and a promise of being employed in war. This prostitution of reward, apparently extorted from weakness, is endeavoured to be excused by alleging the fear that Anhalt should pass into the service of the Emperor, as he threatened in the following speech, which does not want dignity:—"If you refuse me this favour, I must then go elsewhere, and prove that it is not because of my want of merit." I do not think this a sufficient reason, for the estates he had purchased near Magdeburg were a sufficient pledge for his person.

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<sup>1</sup> Meaning the present King.

Be this as it may, and however singular the choice may appear, which has made a strong impression upon the public, it must be allowed that Anhalt is a great commander, an officer worth preserving, and that some recompense was due to him for the loss of his government of Prussia, with which, mad as he was, and often furious, he could not be entrusted.

But none of these reasons can be alleged in behalf of Manstein, a simple captain, a common and even ignorant officer, but a devout mystic; who, without any pretext, has been sent for and is destined, as it is said, to be the governor of the young Princes, with the title of lieutenant-colonel. To those who look into futurity, this is fearful. The whole army is offended. Indeed, it is probably not true; but the very suspicion speaks the public opinion.

A singularity which has not excited less murmuring is that Heynitz, minister of state for the department of the mines, is placed at the head of the commission against Wertenberg, a kind of disagreeable man who has long had the clothing of the troops; a subaltern knave, and

perhaps nothing more; or perhaps less so than his predecessors. This species of inquisition, which appears to be the adopted method, and which will not easily be made familiar to the people, whom it will be difficult to persuade that the late King was negligent and a bad economist—this species of inquisition, I say, seems to indicate suspicions of the commanding officers, since the direction of such trials is taken from these officers, to whom they entirely appertained. There are great complaints, and still greater contempt. This must be an ill symptom, especially after a reign of only two months.

Indolence and stagnation, its necessary result, continue to be felt. In consequence of not having the letters sent after him, as was the custom of Frederick II., the King is prodigiously in arrear. He found thousands on his return from Silesia, his journey through which is a striking contrast to the incredible activity of the late King; who, however, did not devote more time, or rather who devoted less, than another to his trade of King. He only set apart an hour and a half each day on ordinary occasions for this purpose; but he



never put off the business of the present day to the morrow. He knew, so well was he acquainted with man, that a bad reply was better than none. A heap of memorials and projects are on the table of the present King, most of which relate to military changes, on which he has never cast his eyes, and which have been productive of nothing, except of his vehement aversion for memorials. He regards them as a tax on his sovereign authority; and supposes advice of any kind to be an avowal of an opinion of his incapacity. Among the useless writings which have been remitted to him, there is said to be a memorial from Baron Knyphausen, on foreign politics. There are indications which lead me to believe it is favourable to our system, and this has given him particular displeasure; its fate, therefore, was to be thrown aside, without hesitation, as the reveries of dotage. The Baron, however, has disowned to me that he is the author of this memorial.

To the same sensation, apparently, which makes him so much detest advice, we must attribute the following singularity. Welner has only had a stipend of three thousand crowns,

deducted from the pensions formerly paid to the head officers of the commercial departments; the smallest of which pensions only is granted him, so that he is but the equal of those who have least influence, and have not the same industry. As the few preparations which are made are all made by him, his labour must be very great. A single statement of the money accounts is said to have given him much trouble. At present, the exceedings of the receipts over the expenditure, at least the civil, are known. The sum is greater than was supposed by near one quarter, which is much. It is imagined that the chief part of this surplus will be applied to increase the pay of subalterns. Private soldiers undoubtedly deserve no greater honour than that of dying with hunger. But I scarcely can believe they will dare to offend the corps of the captains.

If the King give but little to those who seem to be his greatest favourites, there yet are indications that he bestows secret largesses; or that he has secret reasons for conferring such on some persons. The chamberlain Doernberg, an insignificant person in my opinion, who quitted

the service of the Princess Amelia with ingratitude, she having paid his debts, to enter into that of the Queen, has twice within five days had his salary considerably augmented. At present he has two thousand crowns as chamberlain, a sum hitherto unheard of. What does this denote? Have they at length determined on the scheme of marrying Mademoiselle Voss? Have they cast their eyes on this fortunate mortal, who resembles a baboon? Do they intend insensibly to make his fortune? A captain in the Gendarmes said to me yesterday, "Since royal munificence is so amply showered on Doernberg, I for my part expect an annual gratification of fifty thousand crowns." This must be either an affair of mysticism, pimping, or marriage. But, if the last, why make so ridiculous a choice? What courtier is there who would refuse Mademoiselle Voss, with plenty of money? I did them too much honour in supposing such were to be found in this Vandalian Court. Not in places where men are accustomed to walk double, will any be found who shall stand erect when such temptations are thrown in their way. Besides,

what cannot money effect in a nation so poor? I not long since saw Brederic, late lackey to Prince Henry, become a kind of favourite, because of his art as a *chamber counsellor*, and ostentatiously display the cross and riband of a canonry of Magdeburg (Prince Henry is provost of this chapter). Seven thousand crowns, lent by the Prince, have purchased the stall; and the Prince's well-beloved groom bears the sacred insignia, in a country where there is so much delicacy pretended on the article of birth.

Apropos of his patron. For a week past I have not heard this musical Prince mentioned, the height and depth of whose thermometer are the greatest that ever fell under my observation. The Count of Brandenburg requested permission of him to be present at the banquet he gave to that part of the regiment of Braun who fought under him at Prague. The Prince granted the child permission; and, after having highly caressed him, said, "It is difficult, my little friend, to converse with you here, but ask your father leave to come to my palace, and I shall be very glad to see you." Thus artful are his

politics. He must employ a quantity of such stratagems to reimburse himself for his grand dinners. One of his table-confidants and admirers said to me the other day, "Is it not very singular that the Prince is so little esteemed, after all that he has done for the army?"—And he meant by this to criminate the army! It appeared to me a notable speech.

The anecdote respecting the Academy is still more curious than according to the manner in which I related it in my last. The Academician Schutz has written a very violent letter to the King, against Count Hertzberg, and concerning the arbitrary manner in which he governs the Academy. The King sent the letter to Hertzberg, a marked token of disapprobation in this country. Busching, the geographer, on the same day, refused a seat in the Academy, unless a pension should be granted him of a thousand crowns. The only answer given to the complaints of Schutz was the nomination of Erman, by Hertzberg, without consulting any person; and the King signed his YES, without objecting to this nomination. Schutz wrote another letter, still

more violent ; what the consequences were I do not know.

The disgrace of Launay is not so mild as it appears. It is openly avowed that Government only waits till he has furnished Silesia with coffee, and that then he is to be displaced. He very rashly undertook this contract, which he has bargained with traders to fulfil, who are emboldened by his downfall to disown or break their engagements at the moment when, all the navigable canals being frozen, there are such few means of repairing so great a deficiency. But the truth is the commission is suspended, because that they are secretly sending, through different parts of the kingdom, in search of proofs ; a truly cruel and tyrannical inquisition, which shows they are rather desirous of the guilt of Launay than of the public benefit.

A man named Dubosc, formerly an eminent merchant at Leipsic, where if I do not mistake he failed, and well known for his visionary adherence to mysticism, has been sent for, and is at present employed, as is supposed, to give in a plan of commercial regulations, as a substitute for exclusive privileges. It should seem they meditate a sally

against the Splittgerbers,<sup>1</sup> and that means are seeking to deprive them of the monopoly of sugar; a very just and salutary, but a very difficult and delicate act.

An article of intelligence still more important is that Baron Knyphausen has had a secret conversation with the King; but, though it comes from a good quarter, I will not warrant it to be true. Not that this would much astonish me. I know past doubt that the King, enraged at being obliged to send Count Goertz to Holland, at the very moment when the House of Orange itself complains of this ambassador, wished, after venting a torrent of passion and abuse, to recall both Goertz and Thulemeyer; but that he was stopped short, because of the impossibility of finding a *man* in a country where there are none; and particularly none fit for ambassadors, a part of administration that was highly neglected by the late King. His successor, perhaps, will be taught that fools are not good for any one purpose.

Postscript.—Nothing new since I wrote this

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1 Splittgerber is a sugar-baker at Berlin, who has for many years enjoyed a monopoly of that commodity.

long letter. Various particulars assure me that the Princess Frederica, the daughter of the King, gains great influence, and never meets with any refusal. This doubtless appertains to the history of Voss.



## LETTER XLVI

*To the Duke de L——*

*November 12th, 1786.*

I FLATTERED myself that M. de H—— would bring me a packet from your Grace. He informed me you had intended to entrust him with one, and I am exceedingly grateful for the intention, although I have not profited by it; this I attribute to unforeseen circumstances, which, while I pray for you, have my hearty maledictions.

I hope that the Abbé de P—— has sent you the news of the country, concerning which I have not neglected occasionally to remit anecdotes tolerably characteristic of the moment. I feel the poverty of my own harvest more forcibly than any person; but it ought not to be forgotten that I am neither provided with the pecuniary nor the ministerial means. It is impossible anything should escape the man of France<sup>1</sup> if he be adroit, active, liberal, and has the art to invite

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<sup>1</sup> The author undoubtedly means the ambassador.

proper guests to his *daily* dinners and suppers; for these are the efficacious means, and not *public* dinners. He is, besides, a kind of register office, to which all the discontented, the babblers, and the covetous resort. Besides that, his intercourse with subalterns is natural to him, and permitted. I, on the contrary, have need of great art and circumspection, in order to speak without offence or intrusion on public affairs. I rarely can address my discourse to persons in power. My very aspect terrifies them too much. The King never deigns to look at me but their countenances lengthen and grow pale. I have acted, however, to the best of my abilities, and, as I believe, done all I could with means that are very mutilated, very ungracious, and very sterile; nor can I tell whether the person on whom the King bestows a salary of sixty thousand livres, and a post of honour here, sends much more information than I do. But I well know that I, under the same circumstances, would have penetrated many clouds through which, stationed as I am, I have very dark views; and that I would not discredit my nation, as he

is accused of doing, by his haughty behaviour, his bitter-sweet aspect, and idleness that greatly resembles ignorance.

M. de H—— will more fully relate, as I suppose, the particulars I have sent. He will tell you our cause is a lost one here, unless a change should take place among the judges; that the way to re-establish our affairs is not to be over hasty; since this would but prolong resistance, among men naturally phlegmatic, and whose phlegm we may safely conclude will not suffer them to continue long impassioned; that he himself was too hasty to come to a country which, at the beginning of the present reign, when each is looking for advancement, is too restless and jealous to suppose that a general officer and an inspector in the service of France could really wish to be in the service of Prussia; that the chaos (for so affairs at present may well be called) must be suffered to subside, and from the nature of things acquire consistency (if on the contrary it should not suffer destruction), though it be but the consistency of apathy, before attempts should be made to interfere;

that no person is at present firmly placed; that the grand question—"Will the King, or will he not, have the courage to take a first minister?"—is far from being resolved, even by the calculation of probabilities; that on this determination, however, the fate of the country depends, and even the ultimate capacity of the King, whose inability will be of little import if this remedy should be found to be a substitute for his indecision; that the symptoms are vexatious, and indeed disagreeable, but that we must not pronounce too hastily, because our information is the reverse of complete.

It appears to me indubitable that Prince Henry is ruined past resource; and I fear (in his behalf) that, on this occasion as on many others, chance has arranged affairs better than our precaution. But, whether or no, his cunning, his boasting, his inconsistency, the intemperance of his tongue, and the vileness of his creatures, seconded by the most universal discredit, have added to personal antipathy, and the general and habitual fear of appearing to be governed.

The destiny of the Duke of Brunswick is far

otherwise uncertain; nor do I believe it will be decided before there is an open rupture. But it is peculiar to him, and to him alone, that, should he once grasp power, it will not afterward escape him; for a better courtier, a man of deeper views, more subtle, and at the same time more firm and more pertinacious, does not exist.

You may well imagine, my Lord, that, if I suppose facts are too partial and hitherto not sufficiently numerous to be reduced to system, on which conjectures may be formed respecting the King and politics, I am still much farther from thinking I can, with any appearance of probability satisfactory for a wise man, divine what will be the grand foreign connections, and political influence of Prussia, under the present reign. I have sketched my ideas on the subject in a memorial, which is a work of labour; but which (except the proofs the country affords, and which here, as I imagine, will be found united, and compared, more accurately than anywhere else) is only a succession of conjectures. It contains many things which may, and perhaps not one of which will, happen. I am fortunate if, in

this calculation of the arithmetic of chances, I have so far succeeded as to describe things as they are, and as they may be. From this memorial, accompanied by three or four others, on parts of Germany which lucky chance has given me opportunities of perfectly knowing, a plan may be formed according to which the Germanic edifice may be reconstructed, a work that ought to be begun, if its ruin is not desired. And here, I confess, the indecision of man, the complication of incidents, and the obscurity of future contingencies arrest me at each step; and I have no other guide than what is offered by your grand and noble project of coalition, between France and England, the end of which is to give happiness to the world, and not afford amusement to orators and newswriters.

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M. de H—— has informed me that your Grace intends coming hither in the spring. This certainly would be the only means of rendering my stay here supportable. But I hope you will not so long be left in inactivity so unworthy of your talents. As to myself, after having paid a tribute

for six months, during which I have the satisfaction conviction gives of having employed uncommon assiduity and research, in compensation for the want of natural talents, I think I have a right to shake off an equivocal and doubtful existence, every way embarrassing, requiring dexterity and fortitude seldom found to preserve personal respect, and in which I consume my time and my strength in a species of labour that has no charms for me, or in the languor of etiquette and company still worse than this labour. Of this I have informed the Abbé de P—— in express terms.

*FERDINAND, DUKE OF BRUNSWICK*

*From a painting of the eighteenth century, in the  
gallery of Versailles*





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## LETTER XLVII

*November 24th, 1786.*

THE most distressing incident possible has just happened to me. It is a very extraordinary story. Madam de F—— the famous *Tribade*,<sup>1</sup> coming from the waters of Schwalback, has dropped here as if from the clouds, under a borrowed name, with an immense train, and not a single letter of recommendation except to bankers. Can you imagine what project this profoundly audacious and indeed capable woman has entertained? The conquest of the King! And as, in punishment for my sins, I have known her long and well, the damnable Syren has addressed herself to me, to lay down a chart of the country for her; and, in return, receive, as a deposit, that high confidence which I should most willingly have bequeathed to Beelzebub. However, as she is a demon of seduction, as she does

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1 A woman-lover.

not ask for money, at least, not at present, and as her qualities of body and mind in many respects correspond with those of the Monarch, if this be not an opportunity to be sought after neither is it one to reject. Beside, as the design is begun, and as it will be better to undertake the direction than be exposed to ridiculous broils, I am at present in search of means to afford her a decent pretence of remaining here a fortnight; taking care to draw my stake, or rather taking care not to put it down.

If the Count d'Esterno were not in every respect one and the same, the affair might presently be managed. She might be going to Petersburg, through Warsaw; waiting here till she could travel in a sledge, which from the setting in of the frost cannot be long first; might give a few select suppers; excite curiosity, &c., &c. But this mode is not to be depended on; it is too subtle for his understanding.

Were not Prince Henry indiscretion itself, nothing could be more easy than by his aid to introduce her to the Court. She might have brought him letters. But in an hour's time the

aide-de-camp, Tauensien, would be informed of everything; as would his aunt, Madam Knibbeck, in five minutes afterwards; and her I suspect to be the go-between of Mademoiselle Voss. We must depend on our own resources. I shall take care not to entangle myself; though, indeed, her very first step has entangled me. It is a kind of fatality; and how might I escape?

I have made many reflections on this odd adventure. Our plan must be not to abandon our purpose, and not to be too scrupulous concerning the means. The few we have are, in truth, impracticable.

If she remain in her present situation, there will be no means of seeing the King. The mystics, the Voss party, and the anti-French in general, will all be her enemies. If she conceal her intentions, she will be opposed by the party of the Rietz, and the subalterns. Either I must often visit her, which will render her suspected; or I must not, and she will conduct herself improperly.

If this partake of the adventurer, I voluntarily engross the blame.

Nothing can be done in haste, with a German Prince. Should her stay be long, that stay will of itself divulge the secret.

It is not possible but that, in a week, her true name must be known. The reputation she has acquired will then spoil everything, in a country where seductive qualities will not excuse vice, and where a trip is not the less a trip because made by a woman.

The follies most inexcusable are those which expose to ridicule without compensation, of the number of which this is one. D'Esterno will relate his trifling tales; Boden his trifling scandal; Tauensien propagate his trifling intrigues; before appearance, it will be necessary to let the crowd go by, who will come and endeavour—— I will, therefore, send her to Warsaw, and procure her letters. She may return with other letters, if you do not inform me by what means she may be prevented, should such be your wish; for, though I can delay, how may I forbid her return? Such I have thought the least hazardous proceeding in this fantastic farce, which I, with good reason, think of greater importance than you may be

tempted to do, because that at Paris Madam de F—— is, like many others, little more than a courtesan; while here, the niece of an ambassador and the widow of a P—— G——, &c., will never be supposed not to have been sent by Government, or, at least, not to have come hither under its protection. She, therefore, must not be suffered to commit any great folly.

The King has lately terminated a suit which had been in contest for three-and-twenty years. The Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin formerly borrowed a hundred thousand crowns of Frederick II., and gave some bailliages (or districts) as a security. Hither Frederick immediately sent a regiment of hussars into quarters. The regiment, as you may well suppose, raised recruits. The people of Mecklenburg were shocked by this act of despotism, and offered to repay the late King; who, during twenty-three years, always found pretences to avoid receiving the money. His successor has withdrawn the troops. It is true he loses an opportunity of enlisting some of the country people, but he will annually save thirty thousand crowns; and there is likewise a new member



gained for the Germanic confederation, and what that might be valued at, this is worth.

On Sunday (the 12th), at the principal inn in Berlin, the marriage of the Countess Matuska and a Prussian officer, named Stutheren, was celebrated. The Countess is a sister of Mademoiselle Hencke (Madam Rietz). She thought to have married a Polish gentleman, who some months since withdrew. Once deceived, she next made choice of a young officer. The King has given money, and money enough. It is supposed that Mademoiselle Hencke, who now is said not to be married to Rietz, will retire and live with her sister, that she may not impede the projects formed to enjoy the maid-of-honour in peace.

There are whisperings of a very remarkable and very secret supper, at which the shade of Cæsar was taken. The number of mystics increases. They affirm that the credit of Bishops-werder declines. I do not believe a word of it.

No new act of finance. Depositions against poor Launay are poured in, and in all probability his fortune must purchase his freedom.

Nothing new, or at least nothing certain from

Holland, except that Count Goertz has found the way to displease the States, the House of Orange, and the principal persons who are enumerated among the French faction. I well know what a philosopher would deduce from this: the politician will perceive there are commissions the discharge of which he never ought to undertake.

## LETTER XLVIII

November 18th, 1786.

It is every day more apparent that the King does not forget those who were attached to him before his accession to the throne; and this propensity, which is successively developed, proves him, at least, an honest man. Count Alexander Wartensleben, an officer in the guards, whom I have several times mentioned, had been educated with him. Hence that intimacy which will not admit of secrets. The late King sent for Wartensleben, and said to him, "I am pleased to see you so very intimate with my nephew; continue your friendship. But it is also necessary you should serve the state. I ought to be informed of the proceedings of my successor. *Mein liebes Kind*,<sup>1</sup> you will come and let me know what passes at your parties of pleasure. I shall not forbid them. I shall only warn you when there is any

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<sup>1</sup> My good child.

danger; and of this you yourself will inform the Prince of Prussia. Depend upon me, *mein Schatz*.”<sup>1</sup> Wartensleben, who knew the old fox, replied “that he was the friend of the Prince, the friend of his heart, and that he would never become his spy.” The King then assumed his furious countenance. “*Herr Lieutenant*,<sup>2</sup> since you will not serve me, I will at least take care that you shall obey.” On the morrow he was sent to Spandau, where he was imprisoned three months, and after that, ordered to a garrison regiment in the very farther part of Prussia.<sup>3</sup> On the new King’s accession he was recalled. After a momentary displeasure, which Wartensleben’s refusal to go to Sweden occasioned, and which perhaps was the contrivance of the other favourites, the King has bestowed a prebendary on him, the income of which is valued at twelve thousand

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1 This corresponds very well with the Irish phrase, *my jewel*, or, *my honey*.

2 Mr. Lieutenant.

3 This was a mode of punishment with the late King, and a very disagreeable one to the sufferers; for, beside confinement, little pay, and no hopes of preferment, it was a public mark of contempt.

crowns; and, according to all appearance, intends to give him the command of the guards.

The following is a second example of a like kind. When the suit was carried on against the minister Goern, who was superintendent of the College of Commerce, among his papers was a bill on the Heir-Apparent for thirty thousand crowns. The money must be procured within twenty-four hours. Arnim went in search of the Prince, and offered him the sum, which was most joyfully accepted. This probably is the origin of the favour which the new minister enjoys; I cannot conjecture any other, except what may be deduced from the King's easiness of character, his indecision and mediocrity of mind; which, however, is just and clear, as I have said in my former despatches.

The King has done a third humane and generous act. His first wife, the Princess Elizabeth of Brunswick,<sup>1</sup> has received an increase of allowance, consisting of the revenues of the bailliage of Ziganitz, which amount to twelve

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<sup>1</sup> Divorced, banished the Court, and confined at Stettin, for her incontinence.

thousand crowns, with liberty to retire wherever she pleases. Certain of not being received by her family, she will remain at Stettin. But the news has transported her with joy. She has publicly declared that the lady of General Schwerin, her *gouvernante*, has no more right to give her any orders ; and, for the first time these eighteen years, she took an airing on horseback with Mademoiselle Plates, that she might immediately enjoy that liberty to which she was restored.

A trait which we ought to add, in proof of the King's morals, is his having given up the letters to Prince Henry, which passed in his correspondence with Frederick. Their number amounts to five hundred and eighty-seven, on state affairs, from the year 1759 to the year 1786. It had been unseasonably reported that the Prince was privately of his brother's opinion concerning their nephew. These letters, however, have proved that he did not wish it should be known. He even rendered him services ; and, for example, when Count Wartensleben, of whom I have just spoken, was imprisoned, he sent him a grant of a pension of a hundred a year, which he still enjoys.

The famous chamber hussar, Schoening, the confidential man of the deceased King, has lately been appointed assistant to the cashier of the military chest, with a salary of three thousand crowns. This certainly is not a rancorous act. Schoening, indeed, is not a man without intelligence; and he is the depositary of numerous secrets, which ought not at present to be made public, perhaps never.

In opposition to all these good actions, we must place the apathy of the King, on the subject of his personal debts. He is in no haste to pay those that are not of the household, and there is a very considerable sum appertaining to the latter which remains unsettled.

It is determined that the King is to discharge all the persons employed as tax-gatherers on the French finance system, which in itself is a laudable act; for, were there a necessity for some years to prolong the farming of the customs, yet, either the French collectors already have, or never will have, taught the Germans the mode of transacting the business. And is not the Prussian Monarch the king of Germans? But innovation is a very

delicate thing ; and I see no preparations made to lessen the shock that must be received. The farmers of tobacco and snuff have been informed that their administration must cease on the 1st of June, 1787. All persons thenceforward will be allowed to cultivate tobacco, and to make and sell snuff. This is a very important object ; for the tobacco that grows on these barren sands is some of the best in Germany, and formerly was a very considerable branch of trade. On the 1st of July grants are to be delivered, gratis, to whoever shall make the requisition. (Nay, freedom is promised for coffee, too.) From 1783 to 1786, the duties on snuff and tobacco had yielded about sixteen hundred thousand livres more than the sum they had been estimated at by the King ; so that these formed a revenue of something more than a million of crowns, and sometimes a million four hundred thousand ; amounting from about a hundred and seventy to two hundred thousand pounds sterling. Yet the collectors had not the right of buying the leaf tobacco ; they were obliged to purchase it from the warehouses of the Maritime Company, by whom it was sold at a profit



of cent per cent. These collectors committed infinite vexations on the subject, to obtain a surplus, with which it was necessary to come before the King when they delivered in their accounts; otherwise, he could neither find wisdom in their proceedings nor talents in themselves. The King leaves the collectors their salaries till they can be provided for, and this is humane; for the change will affect not less than twelve hundred families. But how will they find a substitute for this revenue? A capitation tax is spoken of, and is certainly under deliberation. The subjects are to be comprised in twelve classes: the rich merchants are to pay twenty-four crowns; the rich inhabitants, twelve crowns; two crowns for obscure citizens; and the peasants something less than two shillings. What a manner of beginning a reign it is, to tax persons before property! In the collection of this odious tax, which sets a price on the right of existence, the tobacco excisemen are to be employed. The capitation, however, is somewhat softened by being paid by the family and not by the head. But the proselytes to, and even the apostles of, this project do

not estimate the tax at more than two millions of crowns annually; which sum is the product of tobacco and coffee united, but which scarcely will supply the deficiency; and those who understand calculation in finance will be careful not to estimate a tax equally productive in figures and in reality. I am surprised that he does not first gain a better knowledge of substitutes; and that he should begin by operations which I have pointed out as things to prepare, and should defer those with which I thought he ought to commence.<sup>1</sup>

Heinitz, minister for the department of the mines, and president of the commission commanded to examine the administration of General Wartenberg, warned no doubt by universal clamour, has remonstrated to the King that it is requisite to add some military men to the commissioners. His Majesty has in consequence appointed General Moellendorf.

To give a specimen of the malversations attributed to the Jew Wartenberg, which it is said

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<sup>1</sup> The author doubtless alludes to his memorial, which will be found at the end of this volume.

were highly surpassed by his predecessors, the following trait is cited. He made up clothing for a regiment of foot, without having milled the cloth. The coats were so tight that they scarcely would button on the men. The first day they were worn by the regiment there happened a heavy shower. The quartermaster said that, if the soldiers pulled off their regimentals, they never could put them on again; accordingly they were commanded to lie all night in their clothes, and dry them upon their backs.

The next is an example of another kind, and characteristic of Frederick II. One of the cash-keepers of Wartenberg stole eighty thousand crowns. The General informed the King, and waited his commands. Frederick replied he had nothing to say to the matter, for he was for his own part determined not to lose the money. Wartenberg understood this jargon, assembled all the army clothiers, and requested they would divide the loss, under pain of being no more employed. The clothiers cried, cursed, lamented their wretched destiny, and subscribed. Wartenberg wrote to the King that the money was

again in the military chest. Frederick sent a very severe answer, and concluded his letter by telling him "this was the last time he should be pardoned."

Private anecdotes continue much the same. The general report is that the King is to espouse Mademoiselle Voss with the left hand; a German mode of ennobling courtesans, invented by pliant courtiers and complaisant priests to save appearances, say they. This lady still continues a mixture of prudery and cynisme,<sup>1</sup> affectation and ingenuousness. She can find understanding only in the English, whose language she speaks tolerably well.

Manstein is suspected to be the author of some of the intended changes in the army, the purport of which is to better the condition of the soldier and the subaltern, at the expense of the captain. I repeat, this last is a formidable cohort; and that innovations of such a kind require great foresight and inflexible fortitude. Prince

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<sup>1</sup> We know no such word. Perhaps from *κνω*, or from *κνων*; the metaphorical and least offensive translation of which may be *coquetry*.

Henry, who is profoundly silent, in public, concerning all operations, will very warmly take part with the army, should it find cause of complaint; and hopes thus to regain what, by his excessive haughtiness, he has lost. But the army aristocracy know him too well to confide in him; they know that the *Gitons*<sup>1</sup> have been, and will always continue with him, the sovereign arbiters; that, when circumstances have obliged him to seek the aid of men of merit, he has always found their presence a burden, which his crazy frame has shaken off as soon as possible; that, in fine, his day is ended, with respect to war, and that he is odious to the ministry.

It seems one Count Bruhl is chosen governor of the Prince Royal; and nothing better proves the influence of Bishopswerder than this eternal preference of Saxons. Count Bruhl, son of the ostentatious satrap of the same name,<sup>2</sup> brother of

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<sup>1</sup> This word has a meaning too offensive to be translated. If the reader has unfortunately ever heard of the most contemptible of wretches, and the most unnatural of crimes, he may then be his own interpreter.

<sup>2</sup> Who was page to Augustus II. of Saxony, prime minister to Augustus III., favourite to his Consort, hated

the Grand Master of the Saxon Artillery, amiable, well informed, really or pretendedly believing in the reveries of the mystics, with little of the soldier, yet willing to profit by circumstances and to enter the military career with gigantic strides—this Count, I say, demands to enter the service as a lieutenant-general; a thing unheard of in the Prussian army, and which will cause infinite discontent.

An interdict has lately been issued, prohibiting the discount of bills at the bank; which is very wise in theory, but here accompanied by great inconveniences in practice; for either the bank or the King must pay the interest of two and a-half per cent. for about seventeen millions of crowns, which is the amount of the capital of and the money brought into the bank, in a country where monied men find no means of employing their capitals. The bank cannot pay this two and a-half per cent. without becoming burdensome to the King, except by discounting bills of exchange; and it will hereafter be the less able, if the Maritime

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by the late King of Prussia, and who had the greatest number of coats, waistcoats, &c., of any man in the world.

Company, founded as I have before said, on so frail a basis, and obliged to divide at least ten per cent. to the proprietors, should lose any one of its most beneficial exclusive privileges ; that of wood, for example ; and should not be able to afford the bank, to which the Maritime Society pays five per cent. for all the money it there borrows, the same sources of profit which have hitherto been open.

First Postscript.—The minister Schulemburg has resigned ; his resignation is not yet accepted.

The King yesterday supped with his daughter, Mademoiselle Vierey—(the intimate friend of Mademoiselle Voss, and placed by her in his daughter's service since his accession to the throne)—and the well-beloved. Hence it should seem that the romance draws toward a conclusion.

It is more than ever certain the King transacts no business, and that he is mad after pleasure. The secrets of the palace on this subject are very ill kept indeed ; and nothing, as I think, can better prove the feebleness of the master, the little awe in which he is held, and the worthlessness of his creatures.

Second Postscript.—The King is so terrified

by the universal clamour which the capitation tax has excited, that it is renounced. Some of his intimates to-day spoke to me of substitutes ; but what can be expected from an avaricious and weak prince, whom two days' murmuring have caused to retreat, and to whom we can only say, "Tax the estates of the nobility, and lend out some of your millions ; that you may procure the interest which nations in debt are obliged to pay."



## LETTER XLIX

*November 21st, 1786.*

THERE are suspicions — which are daily strengthened—of a secret negotiation between the Emperor and Prussia; or at least that propositions have been made, either by the first or reciprocally, on which deliberations are held. I neither have the money nor the requisite means to discover what they are. An ambassador can effect anything of this kind, and with impunity. But, though I even possessed the great engine of corruption, what danger should I not be in, should I set it in motion? I have no credentials, direct or indirect. An act of authority might dispose of me and my papers, in an instant; and I should be ruined, here and elsewhere, for my too inconsiderate zeal. Spur on your ambassador, therefore, or hasten to oppose to this puissant coalition, which nothing could resist on this side of the Rhine, the system of union with England, the basis of which you have traced

out, and which shall be the salvation of the world. Think on Poland, I conjure you. What they have done (if they did not extend their acquisitions it was in fact because they would not) they will again do, and that even without the intervention of Russia; of that sleeping giant, who, waking, may change the face of the globe.

In truth, it is the coolness between the two imperial Courts which most confirms the suspicions of a new system. All that I can imagine, concerning its foundation, is that its pretext is the election of a King of the Romans, and its purport a strict alliance, which shall destroy the Germanic confederation. As this confederation was the work of the King, while Prince of Prussia, or as he wishes to believe it his, and as he regards it as a masterpiece, it may be doubted whether the Emperor will succeed. But, if the news of yesterday be true, there is a great point gained. Advice is received that the Electress Palatine is beyond hope. Should she die the Elector would marry again on the morrow, and affairs may and must assume a different face. If I am not mistaken, it is difficult to reflect too

seriously on this subject. For my own part, unless my instructions and my means are amplified, I only can observe, according to the best of my power, the internal acts of government and the Court.

The reason that Count Schulemburg, one of the ministers of state, has demanded to retire is, in part, that he was charged to carry the capitation tax into execution, which he neither conceived nor approved, and which he truly regarded as a very unpopular, if not a very odious office. This minister, a man of understanding, and who would have again been at the head of affairs if, at his first cause of disgust, he had determined to resign his place, is infinitely disagreeable to the domestic agents. The long favour he has enjoyed, his rapid fortune, and his watchful perspicacity, have angered or disturbed all his rivals. Neither is he one of those pliant instruments that will bend into any form. The incapacity of most of the other ministers afforded him the pretence of being obstinate in opinion. The absurdities of the courtiers, not to say their extravagant follies, embolden him to return that

contempt which the reputation of his abilities incites with usury. For what will not such a reputation eradicate, especially in a country where men are so scarce? But if, as it is said (I have not yet had time to verify the fact), there be a coalition between Struensee and Welner, Schulemburg is undone, for they will no longer stand in need of him. As he made illness his pretence, the King, in a very friendly letter, only accepted his resignation *per interim*, and on condition that his signature should sanction whatever related to his department.

Meantime the Aulic<sup>1</sup> system, that of mysticism, and the favour of the mystics are continued, or, rather, increased and adorned. The Duke of Weimar arrived here last night. He has the apartments of the Duke of Brunswick at the palace. This Prince, the great apostle of the fashionable sect, and of whom I spoke in my despatches from Brunswick and Magdeburg, had long had the character of being only an *arbiter elegantiarum*; a zealous promoter of letters and arts; an economist by system; and a spendthrift

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<sup>1</sup> *Aulic*, i.e., Court.

by temperament. I some months since suspected him of military enthusiasm. It is now avowed. He comes to enter into the Prussian service. Such generals will never renew the War of Seven Years.

In other respects affairs continue the same. The King invited himself to sup with Prince Henry to-day. The Prince, who continues his awkward plans, stifling his pent-up rage, has informed the foreign ambassadors that the doors of his palace would be opened every Monday, and that, if they thought proper to form card-parties there, he should receive them with pleasure. He wishes to change the custom which hitherto has prohibited all who appertain to the Corps Diplomatique from eating with princes of the blood, and insensibly to invite them to his suppers. His credit is at the lowest ebb; yet I still believe, would he persevere in silence, abstain from all pretensions, impatience, and avidity of power, he would highly embarrass the opposite party, and would at length be triumphant.

Murmurs become general against the obscure agents of the Cabinet; and the nobility, now neglected to make room for the Saxons, would

be better pleased to behold a prince at the head of administration than obscure clerks, who never can acquire great and acknowledged fortunes, except by great changes. Yet the aristocracy is little dependent on such subalterns, and holds them in little dread.

The Duke of Courland is soon to arrive. As he is to be reimbursed considerable sums, it is to be presumed that the whole of the debts of the Heir-Apparent, which it is not decent to have left unpaid for several months after his accession, will then be discharged. This fact, combined with the suppers of the procuresses, the number of which suppers increases at the Princess Frederica's, and for which purpose her establishment has evidently been granted, seriously attaint the moral character of the King.

Madam de F——, who would not depart for Warsaw without making some attempt, yesterday had a very gay audience of the King; an audience of anecdote, at which he complained of his tiresome trade, and was earnest in his desires that she should remain at Berlin; reproached her with having stolen the portrait of Suck from him; and

complained to her of the impoliteness and blunders of the Prince de P——, who thought his very daughter, the Princess Frederica, ugly and slatternly. This continued an hour, and probably, if Madam de F—— had come hither with greater precaution and for a longer time, she might have had some success. But it is a being so perverse, so avaricious, and so dangerous, that it is perhaps best she should travel with her talents elsewhere: to Paris, for example, where she is known, where she would not increase licentiousness, and never could obtain any important influence; whereas, if admitted to the privy council of kings, she might set Europe in flames, to obtain money, or even for her own private diversion. I took advantage of the moment that she thought proper to depart from the route I had traced out, to reiterate my information that her proceedings might have consequences much more serious than result from wounded vanity, and to declare I no longer should be a party concerned.

I. Because it did not become me to risk my character, in an affair where my advice was not followed.

II. And because the ambition of ladies has not, cannot have, the same motives, principles, proceedings, and conclusion, as that of a man who has a respect for himself.

Should she succeed, which appears to me impossible, she is too much in my power to escape my influence.

Postscript.—Lord Dalrymple, it is reported, is recalled, and Ewart remains at the head of the Embassy without a superior. Dalrymple is a man of honour and sense; sometimes wearisome, because he is continually wearied, but endowed with more understanding than will be believed by those who have not carefully observed him; and also with generous, liberal, and fixed principles. If pacific coalition be sincerely intended, it is necessary to bring Dalrymple ambassador to Paris. With respect to Ewart, I believe the Cabinet at St. James's finds it convenient to maintain a spy here, who is the intimate friend of one minister, and the son-in-law of another. But what can be alleged in excuse of the Cabinet of Berlin, that shall tolerate such an encumbrance? This is but public report, which I suspect.



Commissions of enquiry begin to be fashionable: one has lately been appointed to examine the monopoly of sugars. The people of Hamburg offered to supply the same articles at less than half price.

Another to examine the cloth manufactory.

Another the wood monopoly, which is to be reduced to half its present price (independent of the suppression of the company, by which it is furnished). But how? By what means? The change is assuredly one of the most urgent, and the most profitable that could be made for the country; but the abolition of all these monopolies, sugar excepted, which is granted to an individual,<sup>1</sup> supposes the destruction of the Maritime Company, that strange firm, which has promised the proprietors a dividend of ten per cent., be circumstances

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<sup>1</sup> Splittgerber and Co., who had not only the monopoly of all the refining-houses, but also a foundry for muskets, small arms, sword-blades, &c. &c., a manufactory for hardware, cutlery, &c. &c., and another for braziers; all monopolies that have existed for many years, and all granted by Frederick II., the King who is so emphatically, and so falsely, held up as the mirror of wisdom, and the demi-god to whom future ages are to erect statues, build temples, burn incense, fall down and adore.

what they may. This fantastic superstructure cannot be pulled down, unless by a very able hand, without risk of danger from its ruins. Therefore, in his letter to the minister Schu-  
lenburg, the King renounces this project, and commands that it should be contradicted in all the public papers. What a fluctuation of plans, orders and intentions! What poverty of power and of means!

## LETTER L

*November 24th, 1786.*

COUNT HERTZBERG has made a new attempt to interfere in the affairs of Holland, which had been interdicted him by the King, and has presented a memorial on the subject, in which he pretends to prove that crowned heads have several times stood forth as mediators between the States and the Stadtholder; and that the insidious reply of France stated that as fact which was in dispute. Prince Henry believes this memorial has produced some effect. I have my reasons for being of a different opinion; however, I informed him that, if he could procure me a copy, its futility should soon be demonstrated. I doubt whether he has even thus much power.

Here let me remark, we are reconciled. I refused two invitations, and he has made every kind of advance to me, which decorum requires I should receive with politeness.

The journey of the Duke of Weimar cer-

tainly had no other end but that of his admission into the Prussian service, which is to strengthen the rising fame of the Germanic confederation. This Prince in reality warmly protects the system of those who find, in the depth of their mystical abilities, rules for governing a kingdom. The favour in which these systems are held continually increases in fervour; or rather, is become visible, for it never was cool. The brother of the Margrave of Baden, a fashionable enthusiast, has a natural son, for whom he wishes to provide. This is the great affair of which he is come hither personally to treat, and he has met a miraculously kind welcome.

Business is not quite so well. There is so much confusion in domestic affairs that the King only issues money on account to the various officers of the household. It is determined that all his debts, while Prince of Prussia, are to be paid; that the Prince Royal shall have an establishment, and a table of ten covers; that the Princess Frederica shall have another, equal to the establishment of the Queen; and that the period when these arrangements are to take place

is to be after the statements of expense have been formed.

The army is discontented.

I. Because the King appears on the parade only once a week.

II. Because commissions of major and lieutenant-colonel are multiplied to satiety (for example, all the captains who have been in actual service have obtained them; this is the second chapter of titles, and patents of nobility, by scores); a favour which never was formerly granted, not even at the solicitation of the greatest princes.<sup>1</sup>

III. Because much is talked of, little done; because that few are punished, and little is required; and, in a word, because that the army does not now, as formerly, absorb the whole attention of the Sovereign.

It does not appear that Manstein diminishes the credit of the aide-de-camp Goltz, who is become a Count, and who, in what relates to military affairs, has evidently more influence than

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<sup>1</sup> Rank in the Prussian service was formerly confined to seniority.

his rivals. He has great abilities, without having such as are necessary to that place, which, in fact, is equivalent to that of minister for the war department.

It is subject of astonishment to the few men of observation who are attentive to whatever may lead to a knowledge of the moral character of the new King, that he should behave so coldly to one of his aides-de-camp named Boulet, whom I have before several times mentioned. Boulet is a French refugee of no superior understanding; an honest man, with little ambition; a very ordinary engineer, though here a distinguished one, because here there are none. He has been twenty years attached to the Monarch, but never was admitted a party in his secret pleasures, which were formerly almost necessary to support the solitude of Potsdam and the hatred of the late King. He neither increases nor diminishes in favour, and his influence is almost a nullity. Such a repugnance for a man of some consequence in his profession, and who neither can offend nor disgust, is enigmatical.

It is nearly certain that the capitation plan

will be rejected. This hasty expedient would not have been a substitute equal to their wants. But you must feel how much so many variations will diminish all confidence in the subaltern and concealed administrators, who act instead of ministers; and how every circumstance concurs to render a prime minister necessary. Nothing seems determined on except a desire to change. There is no system; for I cannot call the vague desire of easing the people by that term; nor any regular plans, formed from knowledge, examination, and reflection.

None of the difficulties, for example, had been foreseen that arise from the suppression of the monopoly and administration of tobacco, which afforded an asylum to twelve hundred invalids, army subalterns, and even lieutenants. These invalids must live, and be maintained by the King. Nor is this all. Shares in the tobacco company originally cost a thousand crowns, and brought in eleven per cent.; the price afterwards rose to fourteen hundred crowns. The contract granted by the late King was to be in force to the year 1793. Should the King buy in these

shares, at a thousand crowns each, this would be unjust; since they have been purchased at fourteen hundred, on the faith of a contract of which seven years are unexpired. If he should pay interest for them, at the rate of eight per cent. till the year 1793, he must then himself become a loser. Would it not have been better not to have made any change till the contract should expire of itself, or till he had found a proper substitute? The effects which are the representatives of the capital, consist in utensils, warehouses, houses, carriages, &c. &c. These cannot all be sold without loss, which must likewise fall on the King. The monopoly was burdened with pensions, bestowed on persons by whom they had been merited; or, if you please, obtained for that very affair which paid those pensions.<sup>1</sup> They must hereafter be discharged by some other fund, &c.

Heaven forbid I should pretend such difficulties ought not to be surmounted! Improvement

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1 The author is here, as in many other places, obscure. The meaning most probably is that they were pensions granted in return for the sums that were risked at the establishment of the monopoly.



would then never be accomplished. But they ought to have been foreseen, which they have not; so that the public only perceives, in this suppression, a real evil in return for an unmasked good. This mania to undersell the smugglers, or to destroy illicit trade, if great care be not taken, will be more injurious to the people than the trade itself was to the state.<sup>1</sup> Opposition to contraband trade ought to be the consequence of one comprehensive system; and those are short-sighted views which endeavour to correct partial abuses, that appertain to the general vices of administration. The refining of sugar, the fabricating of arms, silk, gauze, stuffs, cloths, in a word, whatever relates to industry, all are directed by regulations destructive to commerce. But may all this vanish by a single act of volition? Impossible; without producing convulsions in the state. And thus are truth and benevolence discredited, and kings discouraged. Woe to him who pulls down without precaution!

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<sup>1</sup> In what does the difference between the state and the people consist? The question is asked to induce the young, not the well-informed, reader to reflect.

The principles of the two Kings, concerning their personal dignity, appear to be so different as to give room for reflection, relative to this country. When Frederick II. established the coffee monopoly, the citizens of Potsdam were daring enough to load a cart with coffee-pots and coffee-mills, to drive it through the town and overturn it into the river. Frederick, who was a spectator of this burlesque procession, opened his window and laughed heartily. Here we have an anecdote of him whom they call the Tiberius of Prussia. The following is another of the Prussian Titus.

The day before yesterday, the clerk of a merchant, named Olier, was imprisoned; and he was not informed, till the morning after, that the cause of his imprisonment was some trifling speech, relative to the King; and that, should he commit a similar offence, the dungeon would give a good account of him! Such are the first-fruits of a gloomy internal administration, of which the vanity and poverty of mind of the King have been productive. What a foreboding of tyranny; whether it be royal, or, which is worse, subal-

tern ! Under what circumstances, and in what a country ! There, where the master, whose vanity is so irascible, wishes to appear good ; and where there is no counterpoise to his power, in the public opinion ; for the public has no opinion !

The commission of enquiry, sitting on Launay, remains silent, retards its proceedings, forces or seeks for facts, and decides on nothing. Du Bosc is very industrious. Two merchants are arrived from each province, who are to give their advice, relative to the best manner of rendering trade flourishing. It is not yet known here that, though merchants only should be trusted with the execution of a commercial plan, they never should be consulted concerning a general system ; because their views and their interests are always partial. One of them, however, has given advice which is very sage, in the present state of affairs ; and that is to forbid the silk manufactories, which are all on the royal establishment, to make any but plain silks. Should they determine so to do, the King of Prussia may supply Sweden, Poland, and a part of Russia.

The Princess Elizabeth, the divorced consort of the King, has requested to have a place five miles from Berlin, and that His Majesty would appoint the ladies and gentlemen who shall be her attendants. It is supposed that the attempts this Princess makes have been suggested to her by an adroit and intriguing officer ; but it is not she who will become formidable to the Queen, though I really dare not say so much for Mademoiselle Voss. What must be the destiny of a country which soon is to be divided among priests, mystics, and prostitutes ?

In despite of all my diligence to divine what is in treaty with the Court of Vienna, I can only form conjectures. However, when I reflect that the Prussian ambassador to Austria is an incapable person, Count Podewils ; and that the Emperor's ambassador, Prince Reuss, has not altered his conduct ; that Prince Henry, though generally ill-informed, would have some positive intelligence, if anything positive had been done, and that he has only vague suspicion, I scarcely can believe any important or probable revolution is on the tapis. Did the Prince (Henry) possess

but one of the twenty wills of which he is composed, and which do not all form the equivalent of a whole, so that he could expend his money properly, and act with consistency, his superior information must give him a great ascendancy in the cabinet.

But why do we not rid ourselves of this complication of political affairs, by at once changing our foreign system, and breaking down the only opposing barrier? I mean to say, by respectable arrangements and sincere advances. Why do we not stifle commercial jealousy, that mother of national animosity, which has silenced good sense, and pompously predicted, supported by the sophisms of mercantile cupidity, that total ruin, whether it be for France or England, must be the result of the unfavourable balance to which a freedom of trade could not fail to give birth? Is it, then, so difficult to demonstrate that the trade of France might be much more advantageous to Great Britain than that of any other country, and *vice versâ*? Who that will but open his eyes will not see the reason? It is in the will of Nature, by which those monarchies are nearer each

other than they are to other countries. The returns of the trade which might be carried on between the southern coast of England and north-west of France, might take place five or six times a year, as in the more internal commerce. The capital employed in this trade might therefore, in both countries, be productive of five or six times its present quantity of industry, and might afford employment and subsistence to six times as many inhabitants as the same capital could effect in most other branches of foreign trade. Between those parts of France and Great Britain which are most distant from each other, the returns might at least be made once a year; and would consequently be thrice as profitable as the trade, formerly so much vaunted, with North America; in which the returns usually took place only once in three, and very frequently only once in four or five years. The sage Smith asks, "If we consider its population, wants, and wealth, is not France at least a market eight times more extensive (for England), and, by reason of its quick returns, twenty-four times more advantageous than ever was that of the English

colonies of North America?"<sup>1</sup> It is not less, or rather, it is more evident that the trade with Great Britain would be in an equal degree useful to France, in proportion to the wealth, population, and proximity of the two countries. It would eventually have the same superiority over that which France has made with her colonies. Oh, human folly! What labours do we undertake to deprive ourselves of the benefits of Nature! How prodigious a difference between that trade which the politics of the two nations have thought it right to discourage, and that which has been the most favoured! It appears to me that a work which should develop these ideas, and which begin no longer to be thought monstrous by the English, would be very useful, and could not be entrusted to a man of too great abilities.

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<sup>1</sup> Either we have not been fortunate enough to find the passage the author quotes, or he has taken the sense of various passages. Smith says, "A capital employed in the home trade will sometimes make twelve operations, or be sent out and returned twelve times, before a capital employed in the foreign trade of consumption has made one. If the capitals are equal, therefore, the one will give four-and-twenty times more encouragement and support to the industry of the country than the other."—(Smith's "Wealth of Nations," vol. ii., p. 61, edit. 1786.)

Postscript.—I have circumstantial evidence that the King is more than ever indolent. Letters are answered in eight or ten days, and in a more long and careful manner than under the late King; which sufficiently proves that secretaries have great interference. Yet what must we say of a cabinet in which the King never acts, although it is impossible to cite any minister whose influence has effected such or such a thing? Even into the assembly of the general directory, which sits twice a week, the King never comes. And this is the king who wishes to change the fiscal system! None but a Hercules can cleanse the Augean stables.



## LETTER LI

*November 28th, 1786.*

PEOPLE are not agreed concerning the kind of services which the committee of merchants, convoked from the different provinces, may render Government. These good folks are highly astonished to hear themselves consulted on affairs of State; for there is as great a distance between them and Mont-Audouin and Prémores, as there is between the Prussian ministers and our Sully and Colbert. The question should be to reverse the general and fundamental system, and they seek only palliatives. The blood is infected, and instead of purifying it, they endeavour but to heal this or that ulcer. They will inflame the gangrene, and render the virus more envenomed.

There are great disputes concerning the manufactures. But, good God! ought they to begin with these? And, should they well and clearly have determined which were necessary to preserve, and which to neglect, ought they not,

before they prescribe rules, to assume as a *datum*—that Berlin is not a place for manufacturers; because that the dearness of labour, local and national inconveniences, &c. &c., are there united; and because that the establishment of manufactures must there become a disastrous extravagance? for which reason the manufacturers themselves carry on a contraband trade, and sell French for Prussian stuffs. As they have no competitors, they affix what price they please on their merchandise; and, as nothing is easier than to smuggle, they take a part of their goods to the fairs of Frankfort, which they sell or do not sell, as it shall happen, and purchase Lyons silks, to which they affix Berlin stamps, and enter them without any other precaution, or the least risk; since the custom-house officers of the barriers, who are invalids either of the Court or army, cannot distinguish whether what is shewn them be taffeta or satin; still less, whether it be woven at Lyons or Berlin. This city neither possesses industry, emulation, taste, genius, nor money, to effect such changes. Another age, and I know not how many transitions among the Germans,



the present Margrave, died; the King seized the occasion to release himself from his word. In a very authentic patent, and at a long term, he conferred on Prince Henry the reversion of the margraviate, on condition that he should discharge all the burdens with which this great fief is loaded. Frederick dies, and his successor declares that all survivances, and donations *in futuro*, &c., are null, and that he will not confirm them. Prince Henry finds himself among the number of those on whom reversions were bestowed. There is little probability these lands will be given him. The question is, will he or will he not have any compensation?

Prince Henry certainly has pretences to exclaim against ingratitude, and exclaim he will. There it will end. Melancholy mad at one moment, he will rave the next; and thus, giving vent to his griefs, will save his life. for mute affliction only is dangerous.

Those, however, who are not among his partisans, will observe this proceeding with the greater inquietude, because it begins to appear that even the personal promises of the King are

are necessary for them to imitate that luxury of embellishment, for which they have the folly to wish. Incapable of choosing between that which is possible and proper, and that which is chimerical and injurious, without means, principles, or system, the present attempts of these men, to which they owe their ephemeral existence, will have no other effect than that of leading, the King first, and afterward the vulgar and the foolish, to believe that the evil is irreparable.

The inheritance of the margraviate of Schwedt is an affair at this moment which, in other hands, might have important consequences. The Margrave approaches his end. After the partition of Poland, the late King wrote to his brother, Prince Henry, that he was desirous of bestowing on him a peculiar mark of his friendship and gratitude, for the service he had rendered the state. Frederick thought he should have rid himself of his promise by a statue; but he was privately given to understand that fame was left to the care of posterity, and that the present question was an increase of possession. A few months afterward, the Margrave of Schwedt, brother of

the present Margrave, died; the King seized the occasion to release himself from his word. In a very authentic patent, and at a long term, he conferred on Prince Henry the reversion of the margraviate, on condition that he should discharge all the burdens with which this great fief is loaded. Frederick dies, and his successor declares that all survivances, and donations *in futuro*, &c., are null, and that he will not confirm them. Prince Henry finds himself among the number of those on whom reversions were bestowed. There is little probability these lands will be given him. The question is, will he or will he not have any compensation?

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Those, however, who are not among his partisans, will observe this proceeding with the greater inquietude, because it begins to appear that even the personal promises of the King are

susceptible of wavering. I spoke to you in one of my despatches of the restitution of some bailiages to the Duke of Mecklenburg, which had been promised to the envoy of the Duke by the King himself. He has since withdrawn, or at least suspended, his promise. So much facility in departing from recent engagements, combined with the clamours of the people, and the exclusive contracts that are trodden under foot without pity, appear to be but ill omens. It has been inserted, for example, *by command*, in the public papers—"That the King declares to all the army clothiers that, from paternal motives,"—all of which have been announced with emphasis, as you will see in every gazette—"the King annuls their contracts; even those that had been recently confirmed." Which clause is the more gratuitously odious and absurd, as he had not confirmed any one; he, therefore, need not have taken the trouble *solemnly* to inform his subjects that he knew very well how, when occasion should serve, *solemnly* to break his word.

The King spoke to me yesterday concerning the woollen manufactory. I endeavoured to make

him understand that, before we pulled down our house, we should know where to find a lodging, or how we might dispose of the ruins. He answered me laughing, "Oh! Schmits is your banker." (He is the contractor for this manufactory.) "Very true, Sire," replied I; "but he has not hitherto made me a present of the money which has been remitted me through his hands." This may show you what engines are set at work to keep me at a distance. The following is a more circumstantial proof.

I was six days very ill, and did not make my appearance at Court, which I the less regretted because that nothing is learned in such grand company. The day before yesterday, the King said at his Lotto, "Where is the Count de Mirabeau? It is an age since I saw him." "That is not astonishing, Sire," said one of the household. "He passes his time at the house of Struensee, with Messrs. Biester and Nicolai." You must understand that Biester and Nicolai are two learned Germans, who have written much against Lavater and the mystics; that they never enter the house of, nor are they, as I believe,



personally acquainted with Struensee. The intention was to lead the King to suppose I was an anti-mystic.

The appointment of Count Charles Bruhl to the place of governor of the Prince Royal has made the party more than ever triumphant. To the merit of appertaining to that honourable sect, Count Leppel, the most incapable and ridiculous of men, is indebted for his Swedish embassy; as are Baron Doernberg for favours of every kind, Prince Frederick for his intimacy, the Duke of Weimar, the brother of the Margrave of Baden, and the Prince of Dessau for their success, and the courtiers that surround the King for their influence and favour. It looks like a tacit confederacy; and that there is a determination to admit none but proved and fervent sectaries into administration. No one dares combat them; everybody bows before them. The slaves of the Court and the city, who were not the first to yield, mutter disapprobation, and by degrees will range themselves on the side of the prevailing party.

There is no parasite, however great, that

attempts to excuse the prostitution of titles, patents of nobility, ribands, academical places, and military promotions, which daily is aggravated. Seventeen majors, for example, have been made, merely in acquittal of vague and inconsiderate promises; and that there may be the semblance of recollecting, at *little* expense, hopes that had been given when every *little* aid was acceptable.

The King makes himself too public not to talk very idly. It would be better that, at the commencement of a reign, the Prussian Monarch should not find time daily to have a tiresome concert, or a more languid Lotto; especially when the world knows the nothings, or the worse, that employ his mornings. He more and more, every day, constitutes himself the redressor of the wrongs committed by his uncle. Those colonels or generals that were dismissed return to the army with promotions or appointments that recompense their sufferings. The counsellors that formerly were degraded, concerning the affair of the miller Arnold, have been reinstated in their functions. To say the truth, their punishment was one of the

most iniquitous of the acts<sup>1</sup> of Frederick II. But his principal victim, the Chancellor Fürst, has

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1 We ought to read *private* acts.—Arnold held a mill of Count Schmettau; and, being in arrear for several years' rent, the mill was seized and sold. Arnold laid a false complaint against one Gersdorf, for having robbed him of the water by which his mill had been supplied and his family maintained. The King ordered the sentence that had condemned Arnold to lose his mill for the payment of arrears, to be revised. His orders were obeyed. The judgment was confirmed. Without proper examination the King sent for the judges, deprived them of their places, condemned them to pay the costs of Arnold, sentenced Gersdorf to restore the water or build a windmill, sent them to the prison for malefactors, ordered Baron Zedlitz to see punishment inflicted or to beware of punishment himself, ruined them all, and, without hearing him, commanded his Grand Chancellor, Fürst, who came to prove that he could not be guilty because he had no concern in the trial, *to march!* and degraded him from all his dignities. The facts were, that the pond of Gersdorf, which Arnold affirmed had been dug to his detriment, had been a pond for ages; that Gersdorf was neither his landlord nor his prosecutor, but Schmettau; that Arnold actually paid no rent; and that the proofs of the legality of the sentence, by which he had been cast, were evident to all the judges, none of whom could have any interest in giving a false judgment. This act of tyranny was echoed with applause through all Europe, and among others by the English newspapers, magazines, annual registers, &c., most of which, with equal piety and patriotism, hoped in good time to see justice thus righteously administered in England.

Another example of this *great* King's love of liberty, humanity, and the rights of mankind, as has been the eternal

hitherto been forgotten. His great age, indeed, will not permit him to occupy any post. But some solemn mark of good-will, some flattering recompense of strict justice, while so many other recompenses are granted, which are favours that are often more than suspicious—would this be impossible?

Under the late reign, the mines solely depended on the minister of that department. An arrangement has just been made, according to which four tribunals, erected in the provinces, greatly moderate

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assertion of near half-a-century, was as follows:—A peasant named Havenbrook had a lawsuit for a piece of ground with another peasant of the name of Merten, in which the latter was cast. Merten, a revengeful man, was continually trespassing and driving his cattle on this ground. One morning, Merten being on the premises with cattle, Havenbrook sent his son, a youth of nineteen, to turn him off; they came to blows, and unfortunately Merten, the aggressor, was killed. Young Havenbrook was tried and condemned for manslaughter to three years' imprisonment; a sentence sufficiently rigorous. The upright, the humane Frederick, who was himself, too, the author of all the laws the kingdom was allowed to possess, wrote under the sentence—"Are ye judges, studied and learned in the laws, and are ye not ashamed of such a sentence? It is My WILL that, according to reason and the laws of Nature, his body shall be beheaded, and denied the rites of burial."

his authority; and this was very necessary in a country where the public right of the mines was the most revolting tyranny. But the arrangement does not announce the disgrace of Heinitz. He has, on the contrary, had several new departments committed to his charge within this fortnight; and particularly some that belonged to Schulemburg. It is a part of the plan to restore all things to the state in which they were left by Frederick William in 1740. This criticism on the last reign may be vengeance dearly purchased. At least it is necessary to be consistent; and, since the grand directory has been restored according to its first institution, it ought not to be left in indolence, and in a state of humiliating insufficiency. The dismissal of the minister Gaudi is reported, who is the man by whom Government might best profit, if he were employed. This conspiracy against capacity and knowledge, with good reason, alarms those who know the persons that inspire predilection.

If I am not mistaken, there is here, at this moment, an acquisition to be made, worthy of the King of France, and M. de Calonne is the very

man who ought to lay the proposal before His Majesty. The illustrious La Grange, the greatest mathematician that has appeared since Newton, and who, by his understanding and genius, is the man in all Europe who has most astonished me; La Grange, the most sage, and perhaps the only true practical philosopher that has ever existed; worthy to be commended for the pertinacious calmness of his mind, his manners, and his conduct; in a word, a man affectionately respected by the small number of men whom he would admit to be of his acquaintance; this La Grange has lived twenty years at Berlin, whither he was invited, in his youth, by the late King, to succeed Euler, who had himself pointed him out as the only man proper to be his successor. He is much disgusted, silently but irremediably disgusted, because that his disgust originates in contempt. The passions, brutalities, and lunatic boastings of Hertzberg; the addition of so many with whom La Grange cannot, as Academicians, without blushing, associate; the very prudent dread of seeing himself held in painful suspense, between the philosophic repose which he regards as the first

good, and that respect which he owes himself, and which he will not suffer to be insulted; all induce him to retire from a country where the crime of being a foreigner is not to be forgiven, and where he will not support an existence which will only be tolerated. It cannot be doubted but that he would willingly exchange the sun and the coin of Prussia for the sun and the coin of France, the only country on earth where men pay homage to the genius of science, and confer lasting fame;<sup>1</sup> the only country where La Grange, the grandson of a Frenchman, and who gratefully recollects that we have made him known to Europe, would delight to live, if he must renounce his old friends and the abode of his youth. Prince Cardito di Laffredo, ambassador from Naples to Copenhagen, has made him the handsomest offers, in the name of his Sovereign. He has received pressing invitations from the Grand Duke and the King of Sardinia. But all these proposals would easily be forgotten, if put in competition with ours. And will not the King

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<sup>1</sup> Surely it is neither prejudice nor illiberality to repeat the words *national vanity* in this place.

of France likewise, aided by a worthy comptroller-general, at the time when he would extend that empire of benevolence which appertains to him alone—would not the King of France endeavour to acquire a man whose merit is known to all Europe? La Grange here receives a pension of six thousand livres. And cannot the King of France dedicate that sum to the first mathematician of the age? Is it beneath Louis XVI. to invite a great man, from a miserable academy, who is there misunderstood, misallied, and thus, by the most noble warfare, to extirpate the only literary corps that has wrestled against his proper academies? Would not this act of generosity be superior to those that are usually performed? France, with pernicious policy, has been the asylum of princes, with whose necessities she was burdened. Why will she not welcome a great man, who would but add to her worth? Has she so long enriched others with her losses, and will she not enrich herself by others' errors? In fine, to speak of the minister I love, one De Boynes has given eighteen thousand livres a year, for a useless place, to one Boscovich; a man



despised by all the learned of Europe, as a literary quack of poor abilities; and why will not M. de Calonne grant a pension of two thousand crowns to the first man in Europe of his class, and probably to the last great genius the mathematical sciences shall possess; the passion for which diminishes, because of the excessive difficulties that are to be surmounted, and the infinitely few means of acquiring fame by discovery?

I have the hope exceedingly at heart, because I think it a noble one, and because I tenderly love the man. I entreat I may have an immediate answer; for I own I have induced M. de la Grange to suspend his declarations on the propositions that have been made him, till he has heard what ours may be. I need not repeat that—he whose hands are tied must call for help.

FRÉDÉRIQUE-CHARLOTTE-ULRIQUE-  
CATHERINE OF PRUSSIA, DUCHESS OF  
YORK

*From a painting by M. Murat, in the gallery  
of Versailles*







## LETTER LII

*December 2nd, 1786.*

ON the 29th, between one and two o'clock, a person from Courland came to me and asked for the Baron de Noldé. He said he was charged with some secret commission, and delivered him a letter from M. Rummel, his brother-in-law, a Syndic of the nobility, and fifty Prussian gold Fredericks. The letter desired Noldé would give faith to what the bearer should relate, and informed him that the Regency of the Republic intended to confer on him the place of assessor, if he would repair to Courland that he might be put in nomination; and that the appointment was to be made at the beginning of the year. The bearer of the letter said he had known the Baron Noldé when a boy. The Baron supposed him to be an advocate, or a notary, of whom he had some confused idea. He neither told his name, where he lodged, how he travelled, when he came to Berlin, nor where he was going. Hamburg, Lübeck, Vienna, Munich, &c., are places

through which he has passed, or means to pass. His journey has been very secret, very enigmatical, very mysterious. He only gave it to be understood that great changes would soon be seen in Courland, and that Woronzow was there to enact a grand part, of which he spoke so as to make it suspected he might become Duke. Such are the chief points of this odd interview.

We must combine this with the return of the Duke, who arrived three days ago, and with innumerable indications which demonstrate that a revolution is either in agitation or preparing, in Courland. Consternation has seized on the Duke. It is only whispered, but it appears evident that the States have stopped the payment of his revenues, because he does not expend the money in the country; and this is the least of the griefs, entertained at Petersburg, against this detested man. Certain it is that he has sent his wife, who is far advanced in her pregnancy, to Mittau, whither he dares not return himself; hoping she shall be delivered of a male child, and that this presumptive heir will reconcile him to his country.

Add, further, that Baron Noldé is of one of the first houses of Courland; that his uncle, the Chamberlain Howen, a capable and enterprising man, is at present first minister, or land-marshal; that all affairs pass through his hands, and that he is in the greatest credit; which, to say truth, may be reduced to this: that he has the power of selling, with more or less meanness, this fine but unfortunate province; which, however, should it be abandoned by all its neighbours, cannot act otherwise than to bestow, rather than suffer itself to be seized upon. It is very possible that the family of Noldé, which knows how much this studious young Baron has continually preferred a civil to a military life, has only thought of placing him advantageously. (The post of assessor, which is worth from four to five thousand livres of Courland, per annum, is the post of preferment.) But it is equally possible, and, all circumstances considered, very probable, that his assistance is wished for in effecting a revolution.

This young Baron is possessed of honour, information and understanding; has a great respect for the rights of mankind, an utter hatred for



the Russians, and an ardent desire his country should rather appertain to any other Power. From his infancy the sport of chance, ruined by misfortunes of every kind, which all had a worthy origin; disgusted with the gloomy rank of subaltern officer, which impedes the progress of his studies, and moderate in his desires, he would accept a place which should bestow on him the *otium cum dignitate*; but he would not be the slave of Russia. He loves France, and is attached to me, to whom he thinks himself obliged. He is desirous of serving his country, the cabinet of Versailles, and his friend. The indecision of his mind must have been afflicting, especially under circumstances when, labouring for these six months like a galley-slave, and certainly in a manner more useful than had he been mounting guard, you have even neglected to prolong his furlough. This, at least, was perplexing. I have decided for him.

Making myself responsible for this prolongation, which it would be so iniquitous to refuse, and which surely will be granted if it be only out of respect to me, who find his coadjutorship

necessary; imagining he still has the right of returning into Courland by throwing up his commission, or even without throwing it up, by suffering another nomination to take place; convinced that no one can inform us more exactly of the situation of the country in which he has so many relations; persuaded that this is an important step for several reasons, the principal of which I shall presently demonstrate, and not believing (independent of the expense of a journey of more than four hundred leagues) I should be justified in absenting myself without having received express orders; confiding in the honour of this affectionate young gentleman, as well because of the recommendations of those to whom he is intimately known, as from having myself proved his principles and his conduct; and still farther convinced that confidence is the most powerful of motives with men of honour, I have thought it the most prudent mode to suffer him immediately to depart on his promise of sending me information of whatever passes, and of returning to Berlin within two months. It has seemed to me that this will conciliate his interest and ours. The

latter because we shall be perfectly informed of whatever we wish to know concerning Courland, of which many things are to be learned, and by which step, at all events, we shall make a party in the country, where the simple title of consul, or the permission only of wearing our uniform, with a small pension, will secure to us a man of merit, should he determine to accept the offers of the regency; first, because Baron Noldé will inform himself, by this journey, what is the degree of stability and profit of the place they propose for him, and because, if he be not satisfied with this, he may again return to the service of France, with the recommendation of additional labours and strong zeal in her behalf; and, should he be satisfied with the offers of Courland, he may accept them, while we may better his situation and augment his respect and safety, by suffering him to wear our uniform, &c., &c.

Summarily, this young gentleman, who has served at the sieges of Port-Mahon and Gibraltar; who is esteemed and beloved by his commanders; who for six months has laboured, under my direction, with uncommon zeal, and assiduity not

less uncommon ; I repeat, this gentleman would certainly merit such a mark of favour, though it had been on his own business solely that he had made a journey into Courland. But the truth is I send him thither, because I am strongly invited by circumstances, and am convinced of two things. First, that were it only perfectly to understand this part of the politics of Russia, it is of importance to us at once to know at what to estimate the worth and destiny, as well as the changes of which this country is susceptible ; which, independent of all interior circumstances, stands by situation the sentinel of Poland and of the Baltic, now that Sweden, our arm of the north, is so seriously menaced. My second conviction is that Baron Noldé is the properest of men faithfully to send us this information. Wherefore not afford him aid ? Wherefore not preserve such persons ?

You must have seen, but perhaps you have not remarked, in the thirty-second abstract from the gazettes, that Springporten, formerly a colonel in the service of Sweden, has lately entered into the service of Russia, with the rank of major-general ; that he is the man who best knows

Finland; that the Empress has granted him three thousand roubles for his equipment, an estate of six hundred peasants, in White Russia, and the key of chamberlain; that he is incessantly to make a journey into the Crimea, &c., &c. Though by acquiring such men, with the knowledge and connections which they bring with them, preparations are made for the execution of the greatest projects, still, by the same methods, such projects are rendered abortive.

There was not time, last post, to write the postscript in cypher, which contains a curious fact, of which Panchand will probably make use and application.<sup>1</sup>

I informed you in No. XLVIII. "that they have lately interdicted discounting bills of exchange at the bank, &c."—This fact has not been verified. The merchants indeed required it might be done, but their request has not been granted, and it was opposed by Struensee.—But to the news of the day.

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<sup>1</sup> The last letter has no postscript. The author probably means the fact contained in the paragraphs to be found a few pages forward, which begin with the words—*Postscript mentioned in the body of the letter.*

There are two versions concerning Mademoiselle Voss. Both are derived from excellent sources, and probably the real one will be that which may be composed from the two.

I. There will be no marriage. Miss will depart in a month, for I know not where; and afterward will return to Potsdam.—“I know,” said she, “that I dishonour myself. All the compensation I ask is not to see any person; leave me in profound solitude; I neither wish for riches nor splendour.”—It is certain that, if she can keep him thus, she will lead him much the farther.

II. Wednesday, the 22nd of last month, was the remarkable day on which Mademoiselle Voss accepted the King's hand, and promised him her own. It was determined the Queen should be brought to approve the plan of the left-handed marriage as a thing of necessity, should she obstinately display too much repugnance. It is singular that, for the consummation of this rare business, the arrival of the Duke of Saxe-Weimar was waited for, who is the brother-in-law of the Queen. The King thus will be father

to four sorts of children.<sup>1</sup> The priests, who have been consulted on the manner of reconciling the claims of heaven with the pleasures of earth, have decided that it will be better to concentrate his enjoyments by an extraordinary marriage, than incessantly to wander from error to error. Nothing has transpired concerning the manner in which this arrangement is to be made known to the uncles; of the name the new Princess is to bear; or of her future establishment, &c., &c. In all probability she soon will interfere in public affairs; and, should she do so, the credit of Bishopswerder will diminish. She loves neither him nor his daughters. Her party is, besides, very opposite to that of the mystics, which gains ground in a very fearful manner. I am going to relate a recent anecdote on that subject which happened in the last months of Frederick II., and which is infinitely important, at least for my security while I remain here, to

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<sup>1</sup> Those of his first Queen, Elizabeth, from whom he was divorced, as before mentioned; those of his present Queen; his natural children, by Madam Rietz; and his half-bastard, half-legitimate, by Mademoiselle Voss, had this marriage taken place.

keep secret; of the irrevocable authenticity of which you yourself will judge; and which will show you whither tends this imaginary theory of the mystics connected with the Rosicrucian-Freemasons, whom among us some look upon with pity, and others treat as objects of amusement.

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There is a rumour whispered about which terrifies worthy people, and which, true or false, is a faithful indication of the public opinion. It is affirmed that Prince Henry, the Duke of Brunswick, and General Moellendorf, mean to quit the army. The two first probably do not yet think of such a step; but the latter is indubitably the most discontented of the three. Rich, loyal, simple, firm, he possesses virtues which would do honour to a soil on which virtue is more fruitful. He certainly has not been treated either as he himself expected, or as good citizens have wished. They were desirous, indeed, to create him a Count; but among so many counts, what need had he of such a title? For which reason this respectable man replied, "*What have I done?*" This artless, noble question was too severe—on



the herd of nobles and the multitude of titles that have sprung up, warmed by the breath of royal munificence—to be agreeable. His modest and antique manners are become reproachful to the Court; yet is the only reform truly beneficial and universally approved, under the new reign, the work of this general. I mean the abolition of that iniquitous contribution called *grass forage*, which subjected the open country to pillage, during three months of the year, under the pretence of accustoming the cavalry to forage. He has not since been consulted on any subject, or has had no influence. I should not be surprised should he retire to his country seat; and it is impossible to exaggerate the unamiable light in which such a tacit profession of faith would place the King and his Government.

Three months more of similar proceedings, and he will have no respect to lose—at least, in his own country. Every corrupt symptom is manifest. Rietz, a rascal, avaricious, chief-pimp, and an avowed *Giton*,<sup>1</sup> insomuch that ipse confitetur, sibi cum Rege, dum princeps Borussiae

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<sup>1</sup> See note, page 58.

esset, apud eius amicam stupri commercium fuisse. In a word, Rietz, the vilest and the most debased of men, manages the royal household, and enjoys a great part of the Court favour. Here it ought to be noted that he is very susceptible of being bought; but he must be dearly bribed, for he is covetous and prodigal, and his fortune is to make, should ever France have occasion to direct the Cabinet of Berlin. So long as the King shall have any power, Rietz and Prince Frederick of Brunswick are the two men most liable to temptation.

The following is an anecdote of a very low species, but very characteristic for those who know the country. The Italian and French dancers have received orders to dance twice a week, at the German theatre. The purport of such a capricious injunction was to give disgust to this species of people, who are expensive enough, and to find a pretence for dismissing them. They have been well advised, and will dance; but such is the low spirit of cunning which presides over the administration. Politics are treated as wisely as theatrical matters.

I this moment learned that Heinitz, one of the ministers of state, a man of mediocrity, but laborious, has written a letter to the King, of which the following is nearly the sense:—"Being a foreigner, not possessed of any lands in your states, my zeal cannot be suspected by your Majesty. It is consequently my duty to inform you that the projected capitation-tax will alienate the hearts of your Majesty's subjects; and proves that the new regulators of the finances are, at present, little versed in public business."—The King said to him two days after—"I thank you," and made no further enquiries. Irresolution does not exclude obstinacy, although obstinacy is far from being resolution. I should not be astonished were the tobacco and snuff company to remain on its former footing. As for the respect which government should preserve, that must take care of itself.

It was an attempt similar to that of Heinitz which produced the last military promotion, to the disadvantage of General Moellendorf. The General wrote, with respectful but firm dignity, against the nomination of Count Bruhl, and

entreated the King would show less indifference for the army. Thanks were returned, accompanied with these words—"The place has been promised a year and a half"—and two days after seventeen majors were created. Since this time, coldness toward the General has increased, and civility has been substituted for confidence. The letter is not thought well of. It is said that he ought to have reserved this vigorous blow for some occasion on which he should not appear to be personally interested; and it is he himself who seemed most proper to fill the place of governor.

The Duke of Weimar is preparing to make a very pompous wolf-hunt, on the frontiers of Poland. The orders and adjustments for this party of pleasure do not very well agree with the projects and ceremonials of economy. Twelve hundred peasants are commanded to be in readiness; sixty horses have been sent, and eight baggage-waggons, with the masters of the forests, gentlemen, huntsmen, and cooks for this hunt, which is to continue six days.

At present, I am nearly certain that my second version, relative to Mademoiselle Voss, is

the true one ; and that the Queen is coaxed into the measure. The King never lived on better terms with her. He has often visited her within this week, pays her debts, and has given her a concert. Probably she has made a virtue of necessity. It appears evident that this connection of the King highly deranges the plan of the mystic administrators. The family of Mademoiselle Voss wishes to profit by her elevation ; and their advice no way agrees with that of the present favourites. Bishopswerder, far from gaining upon the King, declines in his esteem. In a word, revolution may come from that side. Will public affairs be the gainer ? This question it is impossible to answer. We can only turn the telescope toward the spot ; or rather the microscope ; for, in truth, we are in the reign and the country of the infinitely minute.

*[Postscript, mentioned in the body of the letter.]*

The current coins in Poland were formerly as follows :—The mark of fine silver of the Cologne weight was coined at 13-3 r. or 80 fl. of Poland.

As to gold coins, there were none but Dutch ducats that had any nominal value : that is to say—

At the royal treasuries, they were taken for  
k.

By the public, for 18 k.; both of which rates  
fixed by decrees of the Diet.

In the Diet of 1786, the ducats were univer-  
raised to 18 k. each.

The assay of the silver consequently cannot  
longer be maintained; and it is affirmed there  
determination, hereafter, to coin the fine mark  
4 r. or 84 fl.

But neither can this coinage support itself;  
should Berlin coin at 14 r., Poland will be  
ed to keep up an equal value at a greater  
nse, because of carriage.

Under the present circumstances, it might be  
ntageous to draw on Poland for ducats at 3 r.  
e assay of silver is at 14 r.

But, if the relative value of gold should fall,  
paratively to that of silver, silver may be there  
ht with profit.

Generally speaking, it appears to me that the  
nt operations on gold should lead us to reflect  
he state of the silver, especially in Spain,  
dd that Power persist in the folly which, with

the greatest part of Europe, it has given into, of keeping two species of coin, and hoarding the gold.

Second Postscript.—The King, attended by a single lackey and much disguised, has been to the corn and straw warehouses, where he enquired of the soldiers who worked there what their wages were.—“Five groschen.”—A moment after he put the same question to the superintendents.—“Six groschen.”—Three soldiers being called to confront the superintendents, and the fraud being proved, a subaltern and three soldiers were ordered to conduct the two superintendents to Spandau, a civil prison; and there they are to be tried. The fact is very praiseworthy. He makes evening peregrinations almost unattended, and addicts himself to the minute enquiries of a justice of the peace.<sup>1</sup> At least this is the third time he has acted thus. Some of his attendants imagine he means to imitate the Emperor. After what has passed between them, this perhaps would be the most severe symptom of absolute incapacity.

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<sup>1</sup> Commissaire de quartier.

## LETTER LIII

*December 5th, 1786.*

THE news of the cabals, which the Emperor again wishes to excite at Deux-Ponts, and which our Cabinet has published here, seems to have produced a very good effect upon the King, in despite of those who exclaim, *Ne crede Teucris*—an adage which is become the signal of rallying among the English, Dutch, anti-French, &c., &c. May we conduct ourselves so as never to admit of any other reproach.—This discovery will probably, both at Berlin and Deux-Ponts, counteract the Emperor. It was very ill-judged of him not to suffer that torpor to increase, which is the infallible consequence of the languor of labour, or of the confusion which doing nothing produces.

But I resign these foreign politics to your ambassadors, to whom they are known, because I gained this intelligence by that means only by which I gain all other; because Count d'Esterno did not say a word on the subject to me; because



it would have been weak and little decent to have put many questions on a matter which I ought to have known ; and because I, therefore, satisfied myself with vague annotations on our fidelity. I am not, and probably shall not be, circumstantially informed of the affair. You, perhaps, may feel on this occasion how important it is that better intelligence should be sent me from Versailles ; but you will doubtless acknowledge I perform all I can, all I ought, when I trace the outlines of internal—since I have not the key to external—politics ; though assuredly I shall not neglect the latter whenever lucky chance shall afford opportunities.

The libellist Crantz, who was expelled the country by Frederick II. for theft, and for having sold the same horse three times, is recalled, with a pension of eight hundred crowns. The King wrote to Count Hertzberg to give him some post. The minister replied that the abilities of the gentleman were great, and that he was very estimable, but that he had too little discretion to be employed in foreign affairs. The King proposed him to the minister Werder, who answered,

the gentleman was exceedingly intelligent, exceedingly capable, but that there was money in his office, which, therefore, M. Crantz must not be suffered to enter. At last, the King has thrown the illustrious Crantz, praised by all and by all rejected, upon the States ; and he receives a pension of eight hundred crowns for doing nothing.

The minister Schulemburg, after having twice demanded his dismissal, has finally obtained it, without a pension. This is severe, but the ex-minister is adroit. He has cast all the burden upon the first branch of his department, which has been retrenched. If there are any means of being restored, this was well done. You are acquainted with the qualities of this man. He had understanding, facility, and sagacity in the choice of his coadjutors ; was indifferent concerning the means he employed ; vain in prosperity ; despairing in misfortune, of which his feelings are the sport ; ready to serve others ; susceptible of affection, and believing in friendship after having been fifteen years minister of Frederick II. He thought himself immovable because he was necessary, and hopes that this necessity will surmount

the cabals by which he has been driven from his post. Perhaps he deceives himself; for, while we are not difficult in our choice, and when the business is not of itself beyond vulgar capacities, agents may at any time be found. If monarchs wish for a Newton, they certainly must employ a Newton, or the place must remain vacant. But who is there who does not think himself capable of being a minister, and of whom may it be demonstrated he is not capable?

I am assured, from a good quarter, that Count Hertzberg regains confidence. He has bowed to the new agents, who have had the weakness to bring him again into favour because that Mademoiselle Voss is the niece of Count Finckenstein, and because, her family being unable to obtain any advantage by her promotion except by the overthrow of those who surround the King, who are not ignorant that the lady detests them, it is requisite someone should be opposed to her. But, if she be a dame of mettle, change must be looked for on that side, which more or less address will hasten or retard. Whether or no, Hertzberg has advised Count Goertz to take

part with Renneval, of whose prudence he has spoken in the highest terms to the King.

A new blunder has been committed in the military. All the first lieutenants have been made captains; and the captains, whether on whole or half pay, of the regiment of guards, are advanced to the rank of major. Except the war-chancery, I do not see who will be the gainer by this arrangement. It is said the King intends to pay his personal debts, the payment of which, by the way of parenthesis, is more than ever eluded, with the produce of the commissions of officers, and the diplomas of counts, barons, chamberlains, &c.

The plan for the capitation-tax was represented to the King as a kind of voluntary act, and which the people themselves would meet half-way; but, informed of the public disgust this project had occasioned, alarmed by the rumour, and heated by the letter of Heinitz, he told Werder, "People ought not to meddle with matters they do not understand."—(Take good note that this be said to his minister of finance.) "Launay should have been consulted"—(now

under the fetters of the commission of enquiry). Werder excused himself in the best manner he could, by saying the plan did not originate with him (in fact, the project was Beyer's), as if he had not appropriated by approving it.

The general directory, that species of council or state at which the King is never present, has projected remonstrances concerning the humiliating inactivity in which it is held; but Welner opposed them, giving the invincible repugnance of His Majesty for every species of advice to be understood. This arises from the strange supposition that those who give him advice have adopted the sentiments of his uncle, relative to his capacity. He is yet to learn that no one ventures to advise among the great, except such persons as they esteem.

In the meantime the mystics continue in the same degree of favour. Their conspiracy was denounced by the great person whom I spoke of to you in my last, to General Moellendorf, the intimate friend of the brother of Mademoiselle Voss (a man esteemed for his moral character; in other respects obscure, at least hitherto, yet

who probably will soon appear upon the stage), in order that he might terrify his sister, and by her intervention the Sovereign, concerning the crimes of a sect who would sacrifice all whom they cannot rule. Biester, the same, to say the least, to whom it has been insinuated that he should spare the mystics, has a lawsuit in which they are interested, which it is said he will lose. He has accused M. Starck of being a Catholic. Starck is a professor of Jena, a man celebrated for the gift of persuasion, as well as for his understanding and knowledge, a Lutheran born, and a Lutheran minister, but a known professor of the Catholic religion. He has, notwithstanding, instituted a criminal action against Biester, for having said this, and has summoned him to prove his calumnious assertion. Never would such a suit have been heard of under Frederick II. Starck has recently published a book entitled *Nicaise*, in which he attacks Freemasonry. The Freemasons have replied by another, entitled *Anti-Nicaise*, in which are inserted authentic letters from several princes, and, among others, from Prince Charles of Hesse-Cassel, and Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick;

which well prove, what all know who have conversed with him, should they not likewise know his creatures, Bauer and Wetsfall, that a great general, or rather a *famous* general, may be a very little man.

The statement of the expense is at length made out, and the result is that the King may increase his treasury by two millions of crowns, and still reserve a considerable sum for his pleasures or his affections. But, in this calculation, it is supposed that following receipts will equal the preceding, which certainly is doubtful. One paternal act has been performed; the country people have been freed from the obligation of lodging the cavalry gratis, and supplying forage at a very low price. This reform will cost the King two hundred and seventy thousand crowns per annum. But it was extremely necessary. It is the result of the plan of Moellendorf for the abolition of the *green forage*.

One M. Moulinés is the editor of the manuscripts of the late King. I have before given you his political character; and, as a literary man, he is destitute of taste and discernment, and without any profound knowledge of the language. But he is the friend of Welner; of that Welner to whom

the King, at seven o'clock in the morning, sends the letters and requests of the day before, and who at four o'clock goes to give in his account, or rather to instruct the King. As for the ministers, they receive orders, and do not give advice. Welner has had the wit to refuse the title of minister, and to satisfy himself with that of superintendent of the buildings; but he is already fawned upon by the whole Court. These manuscripts are to be printed in eighteen volumes octavo. The two parts most curious are the History of the Seven Years' War, and the Memoirs of My Own Times.<sup>1</sup> In the former, Frederick has rather recounted what he ought to have done than what he did; and this is itself a trait of genius. He praises or excuses almost everybody; and blames only himself.<sup>2</sup>

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1 The publication has proved the author was mistaken. The letters are the most curious part of the work. There are few things in the history that were not known before, except that it exhibits the character of this extraordinary man, as drawn by himself, to those who are capable of discovering that character; and in this particular the letters are perhaps still superior.

2 It is plain the author had never read the work, which was not then published.



The Marquis of Lucchesini, who had been, not the friend, not the favourite of Frederick, but his *listener*, is, though he does not own it, highly piqued at the choice made of Moulinés. He has demanded leave of absence for six months, to make a journey into his own country, from which, no doubt, he will no more return. How did it happen that he did not feel that the personal respect in which he would have been held, would have been immense had he quitted Prussia a week after the death of the King, with this only reply to all the offers which would have been made him?—"I was ambitious only of a place which all the kings on earth could not take from me, cannot restore; that of being the friend of Frederick II."

Two successors have been appointed to Count Schulemburg; for, as the King of France has four ministers, twenty are necessary to the King of Prussia. One of these successors is M. Moschwitz, a magistrate; of whom neither good nor harm is spoken. The other is a Count Schulemburg von Blumbert, the son-in-law of Count Finckenstein. The latter possesses knowledge, an ardent

and gloomy ambition, and a moral character that is suspected. He is studious, intelligent, assiduous, and is certainly a capable man. But he is supposed to want order; to possess rather a heated brain than an active mind; and to have more opinions of his own than dexterity to blend them with the opinions of others and render them successful. Neither is he at all accustomed to business; and is an absolute stranger to banking and commercial speculations, that is to say, to the principal branches of his department.

First Postscript.—The King, who is paying off the debts of his father, has granted twenty thousand crowns for the maintenance and privy purse of his two eldest sons. Their household is a separate expense.

Second Postscript.—I did not believe I was so good a prophet. The brother of Mademoiselle Voss has the place of the President Moschwitz. This is the foot in the stirrup.

The course of exchange on Amsterdam is so exceedingly high that, there being no operation of finance or of commerce by which it may be

accounted for, I have no doubt but remittances are made there to pay off the personal debts of the King. Struensee is of the same opinion; but he has no positive intelligence on the subject.

## LETTER LIV

*December 8th, 1786.*

YOU may take it for granted that there are three principal shades in the character of the King—deceit, which he believes to be art; irascible vanity, whenever the least remonstrance is made to him; and the accumulation of money, which is not so much avarice in him as the passion of possessing. The first of these vices has rendered him suspicious; for he who deceives by system, continually imagines he is deceived. The second induces him to prefer people of middling, or inferior abilities; and the latter contributes to make him lead an obscure and solitary life, by which the two former are strengthened. Violent in private, impenetrable in public, little animated by the love of fame in reality, and making this love to consist chiefly in leading the world to suppose he is not governed; rarely troubling himself with foreign politics; a soldier from necessity, and not from inclination; disposed to favour the mystics, not from conviction, but

because he believes he shall, by their aid, examine the consciences and penetrate the hearts of men—such is the outline of the man.

His debts will be paid by the surplus money. Under the late King there was annually a considerable sum which was not brought to the treasury, but was kept apart to raise new regiments, to increase the artillery, or to repair the fortresses. Now, as the artillery was not increased, as new regiments were not raised, and as the fortresses were not repaired, the money consequently accumulated. It is now employed in liquidation.

The revenues are upward of twenty-seven millions of crowns, including the customs; or about a hundred and eight millions of French livres (four millions and a half sterling). The expense of the army is twelve millions and a half of crowns; of the civil administration, two millions three hundred thousand crowns; of the King's, the Queen's, and the Princes' household, one million two hundred thousand crowns; and a hundred and thirty thousand for the payment of pensions. I am not acquainted with all the

inferior expenses; but when, for example, we know that the legation chest does not absorb more than seventy-five thousand crowns, and that the supplements amount on an average to twenty-five thousand crowns (on which I have to remark that the same object in Denmark costs three millions of crowns; and in Russia, a country almost unknown to the greatest part of Europe, three hundred thousand roubles), it is easy to understand that the sum total of the annual surplus, the expense being deducted from the receipt, is about three millions and a half of crowns.

The manufacturers have presented a petition, in which they supplicate to be informed whether any alterations are intended to be made in the privileges granted them by the late King, or his predecessors, that they may not be exposed to the buying of materials, or contracting agreements which they shall be unable to fulfil. Frederick William has given his word of honour not to make any change, at present, of this kind.

I have already said that the King intended to have made Welner a minister, which dignity

it is affirmed he refused. This for many reasons was a master-stroke, by which he will be no loser; for he has lately been granted an augmentation of three thousand crowns, that he may enjoy the same pension as the ministers of state. The King not only places no confidence in the latter, but he affects never to mention them, unless it be to Count Finckenstein, the uncle of the well-beloved; or to Count Arnim, who interferes in the negotiations of the so much desired marriage, and who is at present too much a stranger to business to be suspected of any system. The supposition that he has one will, at least for some time, be the rock on which the new Schulemburg is liable to be wrecked. He is supported by strength of character and ardour of ambition. As to the new President, to whom already is attributed a depth of design which probably he never possessed, I believe him little capable of enacting any great part.

The *Sieur du Bosc*, who is become a counsellor of finance and of commerce, is also desirous of making his entrance. He has petitioned to be employed in the customs, and his request has

been granted, but without an increase of respect. Speculators, joining this symptom to some others, have drawn a conclusion that this is some diminution in the credit of Bishopswerder, his protector. The party of the mystics, however, does but augment and flourish. To own the truth, the crowd of candidates may injure individuals. One of the most zealous members, Drenthal, is lately arrived. No office was found for him under the King; but he has in the interim been placed with the Princess Amelia, in quality of marshal of the Court, with a promise of not being forgotten at the death of this Princess, whose end approaches.

Our knowledge of the new Sovereign may be increased by a sketch of the most distinguished people at his Court. Among these are an old count (Lendorf), gentle as Philinta, obliging as Bonneau,<sup>1</sup> a shameless flatterer, an unfaithful tale-bearer, and, when need is, a calumniator.—A prince in his pupillage (Holsteinbeck), smoking his pipe, drinking brandy, never knowing what he says, ever talking on what he does not understand, ready at any time to fly to the parade, to hunt,

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<sup>1</sup> See note in the first volume to Counsellor Bonneau.



to go to church, to go to brothels, or to go to supper with a lieutenant, a lackey, or Madam Rietz.—Another prince (Frederick of Brunswick), famous for the pains he took to dishonour his sister, and particularly his brother-in-law, the present King; a libertine under the Monarch who was called an atheist; at present a mystic, when the Monarch is supposed a devotee; a pensioner of the Freemason lodges, from which he annually receives six thousand crowns; talking nonsense from system; and, for the secrets which he wrests, returning a multitude of half secrets, which are partly invented, and partly useless.—A kind of mad captain (Grothaus), who has seen all, had all, done all, known all; the intimate friend of the Prince of Wales; the favourite of the King of England; invited by Congress to be their President, on condition of conquering Canada; master at pleasure of the Cape of Good Hope; the only man capable of settling the affairs of Holland; an author, a dancer, a runner, a jumper; farmer, botanist, physician, chemist, and lieutenant-colonel in the Prussian service, with an income of seven hundred crowns per annum.—A minister (Count

Arnim), who dreams instead of thinking, smiles instead of replying, reasons instead of determining, regrets at night the liberty he sacrificed in the morning, and wishes at once to remain indolent on his estate, and to acquire the reputation of a minister.—A reigning prince (the Duke of Weimar), who imagines he has wit because he can interpret a rebus; is cunning, because he pretends to swallow his own sarcasms; a philosopher, because he has three poets at his Court; and a species of hero, because he rides full speed in search of wolves and boars.—Such being his favourites, judge of the man.

Do you wish to estimate his taste by his diversions? Tuesday was the great day on which he went to enjoy the pleasures of the imagination at the German theatre! Here, in grand pomp, he was accosted by a dramatic compliment, which concluded with these words:—"May that kind Providence that rewards all, all great and good actions, bless and preserve our most gracious King, that august father of his people; bless and preserve all the royal House; and bless and preserve us all! *Amen!*" The King was so highly

enchanted with this dramatic homily that he has added another thousand crowns to the five thousand which he had granted the manager, and has made him a present of four chandeliers, and twelve glasses to decorate the boxes. Sarcasms innumerable, on the French theatre, accompanied this act of generosity.

Would you judge him by military favours? A pension of three hundred crowns has been granted to Captain Colas, who had been eight-and-twenty years imprisoned in the citadel of Magdeburg; and the rank of lieutenant-general bestowed on Borck, His Majesty's governor, who is eighty-two years of age.

Or by his Court favours? The chamberlain's key sent to that extravagant Baron Bagge; who indeed presented a hundred louis to Rietz, and forty to the person who brought him this gift of royal munificence.

It has been insinuated to His Majesty that he had displeased the citizens, on his return from Prussia; the army, from the first day of his reign; the general directory, by rendering it null; his family, by being polite instead of friendly; the

priests, by his project of a third marriage; the pensioners, by the suppression of the tobacco monopoly; the Court, by the confusion or the delay in the statement of the accounts; and that, therefore, it might perhaps be imprudent, for the present, in the moment of effervescence, to accept of the statue that had been proposed by the city of Königsberg.

Are you desirous of an index to the respect in which he may be held by foreign nations? The Poles have refused a passage to the horses, for remounting the cavalry, coming from the Ukraine. I need not tell you such a refusal would never have been made to Frederick II.

Count Hertzberg pretends he has received letters written against himself, to persons in France, by Prince Henry. He showed them to the King, who made him no reply. I scarcely can believe there is not some fraud in this affair. I know the persons to whom the Prince writes in France; and, treachery out of the question, they certainly are not interested in favour of Count Hertzberg. But whether or no, there are rumours that Hertzberg and Blumenthal are

soon to resign; that the latter will be replaced by M. Voss; and the first, who has imagined himself too necessary to be taken at his word, "by a man who will astonish the whole world." (This, it is affirmed, is the phrase of the King himself.) Hertzberg has the knowledge of a civilian, and is well read in archives, because his memory is prodigious. He also knows something of practical agriculture. But, on the reverse, he is violent, passionate, abundantly vain, and explains himself as he conceives, that is to say, with difficulty and confusion; is desirous but incapable of doing that good by which reputation is acquired; rather vindictive than malignant; subject to prejudices; disposed to injure those against whom he is prejudiced; and devoid of dignity, address, and resource.

Blumenthal is a faithful accountant, an ignorant minister; ambitious, when he recollects ambition, and to please his family; and full of respect for the treasury, which he places far above the State; and of indifference for the King, whom he more than neglected while he was Prince of Prussia.

The duty has been taken off beer, which yielded five hundred and fifty thousand crowns per annum, and a substitute, it is said, will be found by an additional tax on wines; but wines are already too much taxed, and cannot bear any such increase. The expenses of this part of the customs amount to twenty thousand crowns; sixty-nine persons employed have been dismissed; but their salaries are continued till they shall be replaced.

First Postscript.—Count Tottleben (a Saxon), who has been appointed major in the regiment of Elben, was preceded by a letter the import of which was that he was sent to the regiment *to learn the service*. The equivoque of the expression is stronger in the German. The regiment wrote in a body to the King—"If Count Tottleben be sent to instruct us, we have not merited, nor will we endure, such humiliation. If he come for instruction, he cannot serve as major."—Some pretend that the dispute is already settled, and others that it will have consequences.

The King about a month since was reminded of Captain Forcade, who was formerly a favourite

of the Prince of Prussia. His Majesty replied, "Let him write what his wishes are." Forcade requested the happiness of being one of his attendants. The King answered, "I have no need of useless officers; they only serve to make a dust."

Second Postscript.—By the last courier I sent you some calculations on the coins of Poland. Here follow others more absurd, relative to those of Denmark.

Denmark has adopted, according to law, the nominal value of its currency at  $11\frac{1}{3}$  crowns for the fine mark of Cologne; yet it has for several years paid from thirteen to fourteen crowns the fine mark. Hence there are no silver coins in Denmark, and business is all transacted in bank bills, the value of which is never to be realized.

When the evil began to be evident, Schimmelmann wished it might be remedied. He coined crowns in specie  $9\frac{1}{4}$  of which contained the fine mark, and calculated that the crown in specie was equal to one crown  $9\frac{37}{100}$  sols (halfpence) currency *lubs*. The fact would have been true, if the silver currency had existed at  $11\frac{1}{3}$  per mark; but as none such were to be found, each person

willingly accepted the crowns in specie at one crown nine sols currency; but no one was willing to give a crown in specie for one crown nine sols currency. The result was that all these fine crowns in specie were melted down.

At present, now the evil is excessive, there is a wish to repeat a similar operation, after the following manner—

I. Crowns in specie are to be coined of  $9\frac{1}{4}$  to a fine mark.

II. Bank bills are to be issued, which are to represent crowns in specie, and are to be realized or paid in specie.

III. It is wished to fix the value of these current crowns, in specie, by an edict; and, as they could not coin the crown at the assay of a crown nine sols without loss, it is intended to raise their value.

If, therefore, the present currency of Denmark, that is to say, the bank bills, have no real value, but their value consists in the balance of payment of this kingdom (or the rate of exchange) as it shall be for or against Denmark, this operation will be equally absurd with the former; for, if



the bank shall pay crowns in specie, in lieu of the ideal value of the currency, it will rid itself of its crowns in specie, which will pass through the crucible, and the former confusion will continue to exist, or perhaps be increased to greater extravagance, by a new creation of bank bills representing the specie, which in like manner will, in a few months, be incapable of being realized.

Third Postscript.—The new establishment of the bank of specie still appears to be obscure. It is intended to coin one million four hundred thousand crowns in specie, the silver for which should be at Altona.

There have been great debates, in the Council of State, between the Prince of Augustenburg and the minister of state, Rosencranz. The first requires the money should be coined at Altona, and the latter at Copenhagen. It is said that the minister intends on this occasion to give in his resignation.

Bank bills equal to the value of one million four hundred thousand crowns are to be fabricated. This bank is to exchange the old bills of

the Danish bank for the new bank bills, at a given rate.

Should this rate, as is very probable, be lower than the course of exchange, it would be an excellent manœuvre to buy up bank bills, at present, and afterwards convert them into specie.

## LETTER LV

*December 12th, 1786.*

THE true reason why the Duke of Weimar is so feasted is because he has undertaken to bring the Queen to consent to the marriage of Mademoiselle Voss. The Queen laughed at the proposal, and said, "Yes, they shall have my consent; but they shall not have it for nothing; on the contrary, it shall cost them dear."—And they are now paying her debts, which amount to more than a hundred thousand crowns; nor do I believe this will satisfy her. While the King of Prussia is absorbed by meditations on this marriage, to me it appears evident that, if the Emperor be capable of a reasonable plan, he is now wooing two wives, Bavaria and Silesia.—Yes, Silesia; for I do not think that so many manœuvres on the Danube can be any other than the domino of the masquerade. But this is not the place in which he will make his first attempt. Everything demonstrates (and give me credit for

beginning to know this part of Germany) that he will keep on the defensive, on the side of Prussia, which he will suffer to exhaust itself in efforts that he may freely advance on Bavaria; nor is it probable that he will trouble himself concerning the means of recovering Silesia, till he has first made that immense acquisition.

I say that he may freely advance; for, to speak openly, what impediment can we lay in his way? Omitting the million and one reasons of indolence or impotence which I could allege, let it be supposed that we should act—We should take the Low Countries, and he Bavaria; we the Milanese, and he the republic of Venice. What of all this would save Silesia? And what must soon after become of the Prussian power?—It will be saved by the faults of its neighbours.—It will fall! This grand fairy palace will come to the earth with a sudden crush, or its government will undergo some revolution.

The King appears very tranquil concerning future contingencies. He is building near New Sans-Souci, or rather repairing and furnishing a charming house, which formerly belonged to the

Lord Marshal, and which is destined for Mademoiselle Voss. The Princess of Brunswick has requested to have a house at Potsdam; and the King has bestowed that on her which he inhabited as Prince Royal, which he is furnishing at his own expense. It is evident that this expiring Princess, crippled by David's disease, and consumed by inanity, is to be lady of honour to Mademoiselle Voss.

The debts of the Queen Dowager, the reigning Queen, the Prince Royal, now become King, and of some other complaisant people, male and female, are paid; and, if we add to these sums the pensions that have been bestowed, the houses that have been furnished, and the offices that have been created, we shall find the amount to be tolerably large. This is the true way to be prodigal without being generous. To this article it may be added that the King has given to Messieurs Blumenthal, Gaudi, and Heinitz, ministers of state, each a bailliage. This is a new mode of making a present of a thousand louis. Apropos of the last of these ministers, the King has replied to several persons employed in the depart-

ment of the mines, who had complained of being superseded, that hereafter there shall be no claims of seniority.

He has terminated the affair of the Duke of Mecklenburg with some slight modifications.

He has given a miraculous kind reception to General Count Kalckreuth ; he who was aide-de-camp to and principal agent of Prince Henry ; who quarrelled with him outrageously for the Princess ; and whom Frederick II. kept at a distance that he might not too openly embroil himself with his brother. Kalckreuth is a man of great merit, and an officer of the first class ; but the affectation with which he has been distinguished by the King appears to me to be directed against his uncle ; perhaps, too, there may be a mingled wish of reconciling himself to the army ; but should Count Bruhl persist in assuming, not only the rank which has been granted him, but that likewise of seniority, which will supersede all the generals, with Moellendorf at their head, I believe the dissatisfaction will be past remedy. All that is of little consequence while peace shall continue, and perhaps would be

the same, were war immediately declared, for a year to come; but, in process of time, that which has been sown shall be reaped. It is a strange kind of calculation which spreads discontent through an excellent army by favours and military distinctions, bestowed on a race of men who have always been such indifferent warriors.

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Not that I pretend to affirm there are not brave and intelligent men in the service of Saxony. There are, for example, two at present, very much distinguished—Captain Tielke of the artillery,<sup>1</sup> whom Frederick wished to gain but could not, though he offered him the rank of lieutenant-colonel and an appointment of two thousand crowns; and Count Bellegarde, who is said to be one of the most able officers in the world. But these are not the persons whom they have gained for the Prussian service. Hitherto, in all the Saxon promotions, the thing consulted was the noble merit of being devoted to *the sect*, or that of being recommended by Bishopswerder.

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<sup>1</sup> Well known to officers for his military history of the war of 1756, which has been translated from the German into several of the European languages.

Postscript.—I forgot to mention to you that Count d'Esterno had, at my intercession, addressed the Count de Vergennes on the proposition of inviting M. de la Grange into France. It will be highly worthy of M. de Calonne to remove those money difficulties which M. de Brühl will not fail to raise,



## LETTER LVI

*December 16th, 1786.*

GENERAL COUNT KALCKREUTH continues to be in favour. It is a subject worthy of observation, that, should this favour be durable, should advantage be taken of the very great abilities of this gentleman, and should he be appointed to some place of importance, the King will then shew he is not an enemy to understanding; he is not jealous of the merit of others; nor does he mean to keep all men of known talents at a distance. This will prove the mystics do not enjoy the exclusive privilege of royal favour. But all these deductions, I imagine, are premature; for, although Kalckreuth is the only officer of the army who has hitherto been thus distinguished; although he himself had conceived hopes he should be; although his merit is of the first order; Moellendorf having placed himself at the head of the malcontents, which the King will never pardon; Pritwitz being only a brave and inconsiderate

soldier, the ridiculous echo of Moellendorf; Anhalt a madman; Gaudi almost impotent, because of his size, and lying likewise under the imputation of a defect in personal bravery, which occasioned Frederick II. to say of him, "He is a good professor, but when the boys are to repeat the lessons they have learned, he is never to be found."—Although his other rivals are too young, and too inexperienced, to give him any uneasiness; in despite of all this, I say, I scarcely can imagine but that the principal cause of the distinction with which the King has treated him was the desire of humbling Prince Henry. At least I am very intimate with Kalckreuth, of whom I made a tolerably sure conquest at the reviews of Magdeburg, and I have reason to believe that I know everything which has passed between him and the King; in all which I do not perceive, not only anything conclusive, but anything of great promise.

The King supports his capitation-tax. It is said it will be fixed according to the following rates. A lieutenant-general, a minister of state, or the widow of one of these, at about twelve crowns, or forty-eight French livres (two pounds sterling);

a major-general, or a privy-councillor, at ten crowns ; a chamberlain, or colonel, eight ; a gentleman, six ; a peasant, who holds lands in good provinces, three ; a half-peasant (a peasant who holds lands has thirty acres, a half-peasant ten), a crown twelve groschen. In the poor provinces, a peasant two crowns, a half-peasant one.

Coffee hereafter is only to pay one groschen per pound, and tobacco the same. The general directory has received a memorial on the subject so strongly to the purpose that, although anonymous, it has been officially read, after which it was formally copied to be sent to the tobacco administration, in order to have certain facts verified. The step appeared to be so bold that the formal copy, or protocol, was only signed by four ministers — Messieurs Hertzberg, Arnim, Heinitz, and Schulemburg von Blumberg.

The merchants deputed by the city of Königsberg have written that, if salt is to continue to be monopolized by the Maritime Company, it will be useless for them to come to Berlin ; for they can only be the bearers of grievances, without knowing what to propose. It is asserted,

in consequence, that the Maritime Company will lose the monopoly of salt. This intelligence, to say the least, is very premature. Salt is an exceedingly important article; and Struensee, who has exerted his whole faculties to secure it to himself, has been so perfectly successful that he sells five thousand lasts of salt, twenty-eight muids constituting nine lasts. (The muid is one hundred and forty-four bushels.)

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I ask once again, if the Maritime Company is to be deprived of its most lucrative monopolies, how can it afford to pay ten per cent. for a capital of twelve hundred thousand crowns? When an edifice, the summit of which is so lofty and the basis so narrow, is once raised, before any part of it should be demolished, it were very necessary to consult concerning the props by which the remainder is to be supported. The King has declared that he will render trade perfectly free, if any means can be found of not lessening the revenue. Is not this declaration pleasantly benevolent? I think I hear Job on his dunghill, exclaiming, "I consent to be cured

of all my ulcers, and to be restored to perfect health, provided you will not give me any physic, and will not subject me to any regimen."

The munificence is somewhat similar to that which shall restore freedom to all the merchandise of France, by obliging it to pay excessive heavy duties, the produce of which shall be applied to the encouragement of such manufactures as shall be supposed capable of rivalling the manufactures of foreign nations. I know not whether the King imagines he has conferred a great benefit on trade; but I know that throughout Europe all contraband commerce is become a mere article of insurance, the premium of which is more or less according to local circumstances; and that therefore a heavy duty (with respect to the revenue) is equivalent to a prohibition.

The King has ordered his subjects to be numbered, that he may not only know their number, but their age and sex. Probably, the changes which are projected to be made in the army are to be the result of this enumeration. But we know how difficult all such numberings are in every country upon earth. Another affair

is in agitation, of a much more delicate nature, and which supposes a general plan and great fortitude ; which is a land-tax on the estates of the nobles. The project begins to transpire, and the provincial counsellors have received orders to send certain informations, which seem to have this purpose in view. I will believe it is accomplished when I see it.

Single and distinct facts are of less importance to you than an intimate knowledge of him who governs. All the characters of weakness are united to those I have so often described. Spies already are employed ; informers are made welcome ; those who remonstrate meet anger, and the sincere are repulsed or driven to a distance. Women only preserve the right of saying what they please. There has lately been a private concert, at which Madame Hencke, or Rietz, for you know that this is one and the same person, was present, and stood behind a screen. Some noise was heard at the door. A valet de chambre half opened it, and there found the Princess Frederica of Prussia and Mademoiselle Voss. The first made a sign for him to be silent. The

valet de chambre disobeyed. The King instantly rose, and introduced the two ladies. Some minutes afterwards, a noise was again heard behind the screen. The King appeared to be embarrassed. Mademoiselle Voss asked what it was. Her royal lover replied, "Nothing but my people." — The two ladies, however, had quitted the Queen's card table to indulge this pretty whim. The King was making a joke of the matter, on the morrow, when one of the ladies of the palace who was present said to him, "The thing is very true, Sire; but it were to be wished that it were not." — Another lady asked him, the other day, at table, "But why, Sire, are all the letters opened at the post-office? It is a very ridiculous and very odious proceeding."

He was told that the German plays, which he protects very much, are not good. — "Granted," replied he; "but better these than a French playhouse, which would fill Berlin with hussies, and corrupt the manners of the people." — From which, no doubt, you would conclude that the German actresses are Lucretias. You must also especially admire the morality of this protector of morals,

who goes to sup in the house of his former mistress, with three women, and makes a procuress of his daughter.

He troubles himself as little with foreign politics as if he were entirely secure from all possible tempests. He speaks in panegyrics of the Emperor, of the French always with a sneer, of the English with respect. The fact is, the man appears to be nothing, less than nothing; and I fear lest those diversions which may be made in his favour are exaggerated. I shall, on this occasion, notice that the Duke de Deux Ponts escapes us; but he unites himself the closer to the Germanic league, which has so high an opinion of itself that it really believes it does not stand in need of our aid. Under the standard of what chief it has acquired this presumption Heaven knows!

There is an anecdote which to me is prophetic, but the force of which you will not feel, for want of knowing the country. Prince Ferdinand has received the fifty thousand crowns which were due to him, according to the will of the King, on the simple order of Werder, con-

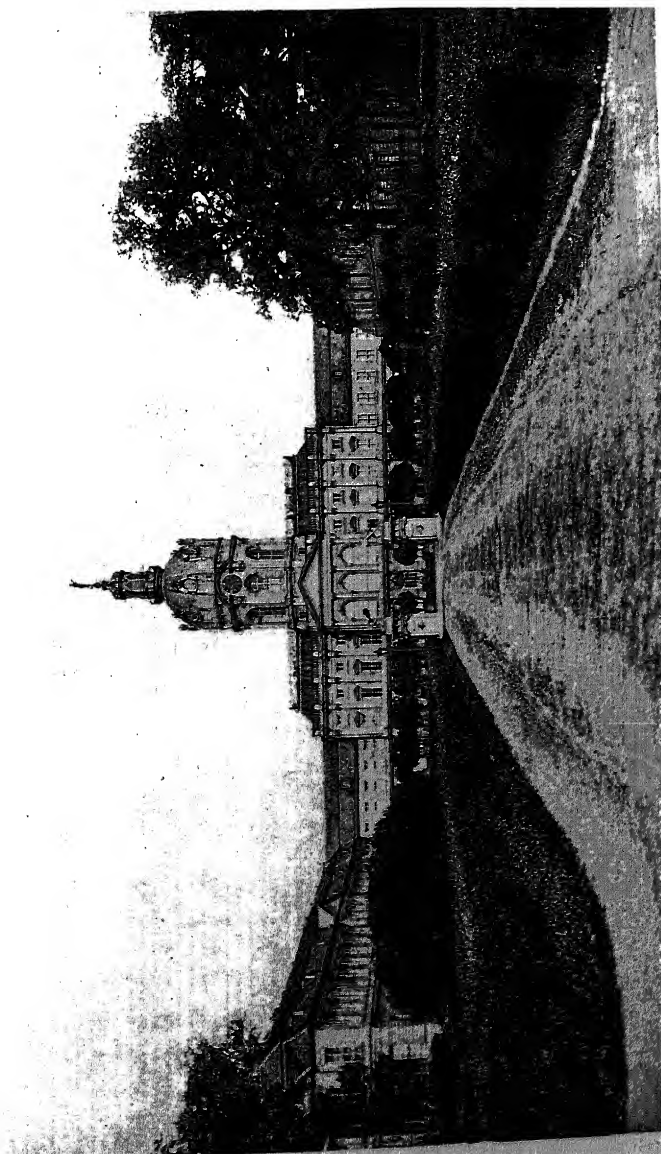


ceived in these words:—"His Majesty has given me his verbal command to lay down the fifty thousand crowns to your Highness, which will be paid to you or your order, by the treasury, at sight.—Welner." An order for fifty thousand crowns, to be paid down, signed by any other than the King, is a monstrosity in the political regulations of Prussia.

Erect a bank, and blessings be upon you; for it is the sole resource for finance, which would not be horribly burdensome; the only money-machine which, instead of borrowing with dearness and difficulty, will cause you to receive; the only corner-stone on which, under present circumstances, the basis of the power of the minister of finance can be supported. Struensee, who is more stiff in the stirrups than ever, since he must necessarily become the professor of the new ministry, has charged me to inform you that the King will probably purchase shares to the amount of several millions, if you will send him (Struensee) an abstract of the regulations of the bank, according to which he may make his report and proposals.

*THE*  
*ROYAL PALACE, CHARLOTTENBURG*







Apropos of Struensee, with whom I am daily more intimate. He has desired me to inform you that the change of the commandite<sup>1</sup> for the dealing in piastres will very powerfully lower your exchange; and the following is his reasoning to prove his assertion.

“The remonstrances of the Bank of St. Charles to preserve the remittances of the Court, on commission, at the rate of ten per cent., have been entirely rejected; it has only been able to obtain them on speculation, and on the conditions proposed by the *Gremios*;<sup>2</sup> that is to say, at an interest of six per cent. for the money advanced.

“The same bank has lately changed the commandite at Paris for the piastre business, and has substituted the house of Le Normand to that of Le Couteulx. As the former does not at present possess so extensive a credit as the latter, many people foresee that the Spanish bank will be under the necessity of keeping a greater supply of ready money with their commandite.

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1 Money-agents.

2 A company of Spanish merchants so called.

“In the interim, it has found itself extremely distressed. Desirous of settling its accounts with the house of Le Couteulx, and other houses in France, it was in want of the sum of three millions of French livres (a hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds sterling). To obtain this, it addressed itself to Government, and endeavouring to call in sixty millions of reals<sup>1</sup> which were its due. Government having, under various pretences, declined payment, the bank declared itself insolvent, and that it must render the state of its affairs public. This means produced its effect; Government came to its aid, and gave it assignments for twenty millions of reals, payable annually.”

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<sup>1</sup> The intrinsic value of the real according to the mint assay is 5½d.

## LETTER LVII

*December 19th, 1786.*

THE comedy which Prince Henry had promised the world every Monday, had its first representation on yesterday evening. The King came, contrary to the expectation of the Prince, and highly amused himself. I was a close observer of royalty, as you may suppose. It is incontrovertibly the cup of Circe which must be presented, in order to seduce him, but filled rather with beer than tokay. One remark sufficiently curious, which I made, was that Prince Henry amused himself for his own personal pleasure, and was not subject to the least absence of mind, neither of politics nor of attention to his guests. All the foreign ministers were present, but I was the only stranger who stayed to supper; and the King, who, when the comedy was over, behaved all the evening with great reserve, except when some burst of laughter was forced from him by the obscene jests of Prince Frederick of Brunswick,



contemplated me with an eye more than cold. He is incessantly irritated against me by speeches which are made *for me*; and the most harmless of my acquaintance are represented as personally offensive to His Majesty. For my own part, I am perfectly the reverse of disconsolate on the subject. I only notice this that I may describe my present situation, exactly as it is, without any hypocrisy.

It is true that Count Hertzberg has been on the point of losing his place; the occasion of which was what follows. He had announced the promised arrangement to the Duke of Mecklenburg, notwithstanding which, the affair was not expedited. Driven beyond his patience, and impatience in him is always brutal, he one day said to the members of the General Directory, "Gentlemen, you must proceed a little faster; business is not done thus; this is a state which can only proceed with activity."—An account was given to the King of this vehement apostrophe. The Sovereign warmly reprimanded his minister, who offered to resign. Blumenthal, it is said, accommodated the affair.

Apropos of the Duke of Mecklenburg, the

King, when he received his thanks for the restitution of his bailliages, said to him, "I have done nothing more than my duty; read the device of my order" (*Suum cuique*<sup>1</sup>). The Poles, when the Prussian arms were erected to denote the limits of the frontiers, after dismemberment by the late King, added *rapuit* to the motto.<sup>2</sup> I do not imagine Frederick William will ever give occasion to a similar epigram.

A very remarkable incident in the history of the human heart was the following. After various retrenchments had been made upon this Duke, especially in the promises that had been given him, one of the courtiers represented to the King that he would not be satisfied.—"Well," said His Majesty, "then we must give him a yellow riband"; and, accordingly, yesterday the yellow riband was given. The vainglorious Duke at this moment found the arrangement of the bailliages perfectly satisfactory, and this was the occasion of his coming to return thanks.

Would you wish to obtain a tolerably just

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1 To every one his own.

2 *Suum cuique rapuit*.—He took from every one his own.

idea of the manner of living, in this noble *tennis-court*,<sup>1</sup> called the Court of Berlin? If so, pay some attention to the following traits, and recollect that I could collect a hundred of the same species.

The Princess Frederica of Prussia is now nineteen, and her apartment is open at eleven every morning. The Dukes of Weimar, Holstein, and Mecklenburg, all ill-bred libertines, go in and out of it two or three times in the course of the forenoon.

The Duke of Mecklenburg was recounting I know not what tale to the King. The Prince of Brunswick, awkwardly enough, trod on the toe of a person present, to make him take notice of something which he thought ridiculous. The Duke stopped short in his discourse—"I believe, Sir, you are diverting yourself at my expense."—He went on with his conversation to the King, and presently stopped again—"I have long, Sir,

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<sup>1</sup> *Tripot*.—The just value of the author's word seems to be *show-booth*. Tennis-courts were formerly hired in France by rope-dancers, tumblers, and showmen; in which we must not omit the allusion to the debauchery of manners of such people in France.

been acquainted with the venom of your tongue; if you have anything to say, speak it to my face, and I shall answer you.”—More conversation and other interruptions.—“When I am gone, Sire, the Prince will paint me in charming colours; I beg your Majesty will recollect what has just passed.”

This same Prince Frederick is, as I have very often told you, the chief of the mystics, against whom he uttered the most horrid things to Baron Knyphausen.—“But how is this, my Lord?” replied the Baron; “I understood you were the Pope of that Church.”—“It is false.”—“I have too good an opinion of your honesty to imagine you can be of a sect which you disavow; I, therefore, give you my promise everywhere to declare you despise the mystics too much to be one of them; and thus you will recover your reputation.”—The Prince beat about the bush, and called off his dogs.

A courtier, a grand marshal of the Court, petitions for a place promised to five candidates. I remarked to him, “But how, Sir, if the place be engaged?”—“Oh, engagements are nothing at

present!" answered he gravely; "for this month past we have left off keeping our word."

Welner, the real author of the disgrace of Schulemburg, went to see him, pitied him, and said, "You have too much merit not to have many enemies."—"I, many enemies, Sir!" said the ex-minister; "I know of but three—Prince Frederick, because I would not give his huntsman a place; Bishopswerder, because I dismissed one of his dependents; and you, because—I know not why." Welner began to weep, and to swear that detraction was everywhere rending his character.—"Tears are unworthy of men," said Schulemburg; "and I am unable to thank you for yours."

In a word, all is sunken to the diminutive, as all was exalted to the grand.

It is asserted that the Prussian merchants will be allowed a free trade in salt and wax. I cannot verify the fact to-day; Struensee will be too much occupied, it being post day; but if it be true, the Maritime Company, which at once will be deprived of salt, wax, coffee, tobacco, and probably of wood, cannot longer support the burden of eighteen per cent. at the least; a profit

which no solid trade can afford, and which, perhaps, Schulemburg himself, with all his lucrative exclusive privileges, could not have paid, but by perplexing the treasury accounts, so that the gains of one branch concealed the deficiencies of another.

As to the silk manufactures, which are proposed to be laid aside, I do not perceive that any inconvenience whatever will result from this. An annual bounty of forty thousand rix-dollars (six thousand two hundred and fifty pounds sterling) divided among the master weavers of Berlin, added to the prohibition of foreign silks, will never enable them to maintain a competition. Nay, as I have before explained to you, the very manufacturers themselves smuggle, and thus supply more than one-third of the silks that are used in the country; for it is easy to conceive that purchasers will prefer the best silks, which have more substance than, and are of superior workmanship to, those which monopoly would oblige them to buy. Not that the raw materials cost the manufacturer of Berlin more than they do the manufacturer of Lyons. They both pro-

cure them from the same countries, and the former does not pay the six per cent. entrance duty to which the Lyons manufacturer is subject; besides that, the German workman will labour with more diligence than the French; nor is labour much dearer here than at Lyons. The one receives eightpence an ell for making, and the other eightpence three farthings for the same quantity, of equal fineness, which scarcely amounts to one and a half per cent. on the price of the silk, estimated at five livres (four shillings and twopence) the French ell. The Berlin manufacturer has likewise, by a multitude of local calculations of trade, to which I have paid severe attention, an advantage of thirty per cent. over the Lyons trader, at the fair of Frankfort on the Oder. And, whether it proceed from a defect in the government, the poverty of the workmen, or the ignorance of the manufacturer, he still cannot support the competition. Of what use, therefore, are so many ruinous looms, of which there are not less than sixteen hundred and fifty, at Berlin, Potsdam, Frankfort, and Koepnic?—the product of which, however, is far from being equivalent

to the same number of looms at Lyons. The Berlin weaver will not, at the utmost, do more than two-thirds of the work turned out of hand by the weaver of Lyons. Of these sixteen hundred and fifty looms, we may reckon about twelve hundred in which are weaved taffetas, brocades, velvets, &c. The remainder are employed in fabricating gauze, about nine hundred and eighty thousand Berlin ells of which are annually produced. (The French ell is equal to an ell three-quarters of Berlin measure.) The twelve hundred silk-looms only produce about nine hundred and sixty thousand ells; which in the whole amount to one million nine hundred and forty thousand ells. The sum total of the looms consume about one hundred and fourteen thousand pounds weight of raw silk, at sixteen ounces to the pound. (You know that seventy-six thousand pounds weight of wrought silk will require about one hundred and fourteen thousand pounds weight of undressed silk.) There are also twenty-eight thousand pair, per annum, of silk stockings fabricated at Berlin; which consume about five thousand pounds weight of raw silk. It is principally in the stocking



manufactory that the silk of the country is employed; which, in reality, is superior in quality to that of the Levant; but they so ill understand the art of spinning it, in the Prussian states, that it is with difficulty worked in the silk-loom. The stocking manufacturers use it to a greater advantage, because, being cheap, and of a strong quality, stockings are made from it preferable to those of Nismes and Lyons, in which cities the rejected silk alone is set apart for stockings. From eight to twelve thousand pounds weight of silk is annually obtained in the Prussian states, in which there are mulberry trees enough to supply thirty thousand pounds weight. This constitutes no very formidable rivalship with the silk produced in the states of the King of Sardinia.

The commission of enquiry has written to inform Launay that it has no further demand to make from him; and in consequence he has addressed the King for permission to depart.—The King replied, “I have told you to wait here till the commission shall be closed.”—There is either cunning or tyranny on one side or the other.

## LETTER LVIII

*December 23rd, 1786.*

MADemoiselle HENCKE, or Madame Rietz, as you think proper to call her, has petitioned the King to be pleased to let her know what she is to expect, and to give her an estate on which she may retire. The Sovereign offered her a country-house, at the distance of some leagues from Potsdam. The lady sent a positive refusal, and the King, in return, will not hear any mention made of an estate. It is difficult to say what shall be the product of this conflict between cupidity and avarice. The pastoral, in the meantime, proceeds without relaxation. *Ines de Castro* has several times been performed at the German theatre, imitated from the English, and not from the French. In the fourth act, the Prince repeats with ardour every oath of fidelity to a lady of honour. This has been the moment of each representation which the Queen has chosen to leave the house. Was it the effect of chance, or

was it intendedly marked? This is a question that cannot be answered, from any consideration of the turbulent and versatile, but not very feeble, character of this Princess.

When her brother-in-law, the Duke of Weimar, arrived, the King gave him a very gracious reception; and by degrees his countenance changed to icy coldness. Conjectures are that he has been lukewarm, or has wanted address in his negotiation with the Queen, on the subject of the marriage, which is far from being determined on. Two private houses have been bought at Potsdam, and have been furnished with every degree of magnificence. And to what purpose, if marriage be intended? May not the wife be lodged in the palace? Speaking of arrangements, let me inform you that the King has sent a M. Paris, his valet de chambre, into France, to pay his personal debts there, and to purchase such things as are wanting to these newly-bought houses which are consecrated to love.

The relations of Mademoiselle Voss, who four months since pressed her to depart for Silesia, there to marry a gentleman who asked her hand,

are at present the first to declare that the projected royal marriage would be ridiculous, and even absurd. In fact, its consequences might be very dangerous; for, should disgust succeed enjoyment, a thing which has been seen to happen, Mademoiselle Voss must separate with a pension; instead of which, in her rank of favourite, she might rapidly make her own fortune, that of her family, and procure the advancement of her creatures.

Be this as it may, the time is passed at Potsdam in projecting bowers for love; and, though the Sovereign might not perhaps be exactly addressed in the words of *La Hire* to Charles VII. —“I assure you, Sire, it is impossible to lose a kingdom with greater gaiety”—it may at least be said, “It is impossible to risk a kingdom more tenderly.”—But, whatever tranquillity may be affected, there are proceedings and projects which, without alarming, for he certainly has valour, occupy the Monarch. The journey of the Emperor to Cherson, the very abrupt and very formal declaration of Russia to the city of Dantzic, the intended camp of eighty thousand men in Bohemia,

for the amusement of the King of Naples, are at least incidents that may compel attention, if not remark. There are doubts concerning the journey of the Empress into the Crimea, Potemkin being unwilling to make her a witness of the incredible poverty of the people and the army, in this newly acquired garden.

The discouragement of the ministry of Berlin still continues to increase. The King, for these two months, has not acted in concert with any single minister. Hence their torpor and pusillanimity are augmented. Count Hertzberg is progressive in his descent, and Werder begins to decline. The King remains totally unconcerned; and never was the mania of reigning in person and of doing nothing carried to greater excess. Instead of the capitation, a tax on houses is talked of as a substitute. I begin to think that neither of these taxes will take place. There is an inclination to retract without disgrace, if that be possible; and the pretext will be furnished by the advice of the provincial presidents. It is the more extraordinary that this capitation tax should be so much persisted in, since, under the reign

of Frederick William I. a similar attempt was made, and which on the second year was obliged to be renounced.

The Prussian army has made a new acquisition, of the same kind with those by which it has been enriched for these four months past. I speak of Prince Eugene of Wirtemberg. He began his career by an excess of libertinage. He since has distinguished himself in the trade of *Corporal-schlag*,<sup>1</sup> and by stretching the severity of discipline to ferocity. He, notwithstanding, has not acquired any great reputation by these means. He has lived at Paris, and plunged into all the follies of mesmerism.<sup>2</sup> He afterwards professed to be a somnambulist, and next continued the farce by the practice of midwifery. These different masquerades accompanied and concealed the real object of his ambition and his fervour, which is to give credit to the sect of the mystics, of whom he is one of the most enthusiastic chiefs. A regiment has lately been granted him, which

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1 The flogging-corporal: from *schlagen*, to strike or whip.

2 Mesmer was the quack-father of the modern magnetists; with whom, by the kind intervention of Mainaduc, we are now become somewhat acquainted.

brings him to Berlin. His fortune will not permit him to live wholly there; but his situation will allow him to make journeys to that city, where he will be useful to the fathers of the new church. Singular, ardent, and active, he delivers himself like an oracle, and enslaves his hearers by his powerful and ecstatic elocution, with his eyes sometimes haggard, always inflamed, and his countenance in excessive emotion. In a word, he is one of those men whom hypocrites and jugglers make their successful precursors.

*23rd, at Noon.*

I have just had a very deep and almost sentimental conversation with Prince Henry.

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He is in a state of utter discouragement, as well on his own behalf as on behalf of his country. He has confirmed all I have related to you, and all I shall now relate.—Torpor in every operation, gloom at Court, stupefaction among ministers, discontent everywhere.—Little is projected, less still is executed. When it is noticed that business is suffered to languish, the King's being in love is

very gravely given as the reason; and it is affirmed that the vigour of administration depends on the compliance of Mademoiselle Voss. Remarks at the same time are made how ridiculous it is thus to suspend the affairs of a whole kingdom, &c., &c.

The General Directory, which should be a council of state, is nothing more than an office to expedite common occurrences. If ministers make any proposition no answer is returned; if they remonstrate they meet with disgust. What they ought to do is so far from what they actually do that the debasement of their dignity occasions very disagreeable reflections. Never was a public opinion produced more suddenly than it has been by Frederick William II., in a country where the seeds of such opinion did not appear to exist.

Prince Henry can find no remedy for domestic vices, but he has no apprehensions concerning foreign affairs; because that the King is at present wholly decided in favour of France, and still more destitute of confidence for the favourers of the English faction.—Pray take notice that this is the version of the Prince; not that I am very



incapable of believing it, if we do not throw up our own chances.

What the public papers have announced respecting the journey of Prince Henry, is without foundation. Some wish to go to Spa and France, but no plan is yet determined on; a vague hope, which he cannot suffer to expire, notwithstanding the blows he receives, will detain him at Rheinsberg. Year will succeed to year; the moment of rest will arrive, and habit will enchain him in his frosty castle, which he has lately enlarged and rendered more commodious. To these different motives, add a nullity of character, a will unstable as the clouds, frequent indisposition, and a heated imagination, by which he is exhausted. That which we desire without success, gives more torment than that which is executed with difficulty.

A second minister is to be appointed for Silesia; one singly is a kind of viceroy. It is dangerous, say they, to see with the eyes of an individual only. *Divide et impera*. Thus far have they advanced in their politics.

Prince Frederick of Brunswick is ardently

active in his intrigues against Prince Henry, and the Duke his brother. What he wishes is not known; but he wishes, and hence he has acquired a certain importance among the tumultuous crowd, who cannot perceive that a contemptible prince is still more contemptible than an ordinary man. He neither can be of any durable utility, nor in the least degree agreeable or estimable; but, under certain given circumstances, he may be a very necessary spy.

## LETTER LIX

*December 26th, 1786.*

A GRAND list of promotions is spoken of, in which Prince Henry and the Duke of Brunswick are included, as field-m Marshals. But the first says he will not be a field-marshal. He continually opposed that title being bestowed on the Duke, under Frederick II., who refused to confer such a rank on the princes of the blood. This alternative of haughtiness and vanity, even aided by his ridiculous comedy, will not lead him far. He intends to depart in the month of September for Spa; he is afterwards to visit our southern provinces, and from thence is to continue his journey to Paris, where he is to pass the winter. Such are his present projects, and the probability is sufficiently great that not anything of all this will happen.

The King has declared that he will not bestow any places on persons who are already in office under the Princes. This may perhaps be

the cause that Count Nostitz has forsaken Prince Henry. The Count is a very strange kind of being.

First sent into Sweden, where he erected himself a chief of some envoys of the second order, finding himself dissatisfied with the severe laws of etiquette, he passed a slovenly life in an office which he exercised without abilities. On his return, he procured himself the appointment of one of the gentlemen who accompanied the Prince Royal into Russia, but the consent of the Prince he had forgotten to ask. He was consequently regarded as an inconvenient inspector, and was but sparingly produced on public occasions. Hence arose ill-humour, complaints, and murmurs. The late King sent him into Spain, where he dissipated the remainder of his fortune. The merchants of Embden, and of Königsberg, requested the Spaniards would lower the duties on I know not what species of merchandise. Count Nostitz solicited, negotiated, and presently wrote word—"That the new regulations were wholly to the advantage of the Prussian subjects." The King ordered the Court

of Spain to be thanked. Fortunately, Count Finckenstein, who had not received the regulations, delayed sending the thanks. The regulations came, and the Prussian merchants were found to be more burdened than formerly. His Majesty was in a rage. Nostitz was suddenly recalled, and arrived at Berlin without the fortune that he had spent, destitute of the respect that he had lost, and deprived of all future hopes. Prince Henry welcomed him to his palace, an asylum open to all malcontents. Here he remained eighteen months, and here displayed himself in the same manner that he had done everywhere else—inconsistent in his imaginations, immoral in mind, ungracious in manners, not capable of writing, not willing to read, as vain as a block-head, as hot as a turkey-cock, and unfit for any kind of office, because he neither possesses principles, seductive manners, nor knowledge. Such as here depicted, this insipid mortal, the true hero of the Dunciad, is in a few days to be appointed envoy to the Electorate of Hanover. In excuse for so capricious a choice, it is alleged that he will have nothing to do in the place.

But wherefore send a man to a place where he has nothing to do?

Madame Rietz, who of all the mistresses of the Sovereign has most effectually resisted the inconstancy of men, and the intrigues of the wardrobe,<sup>1</sup> has modestly demanded the margraviate of Schwedt from the King, to serve as a place of retreat; and four gentlemen to travel with her son as with the son of a monarch. This audacious request has not displeased the King, who had been offended by the demand made of an estate. He, no doubt, has discovered that he is highly respected, now that he receives propositions so honourable.

His former friends no longer can obtain a minute's audience; the gates to them are gates of brass. But a comedian, whose name is Marron, at present an inn-keeper at Verviers, lately came to solicit his protection. He chose the moment when the King was stepping into his carriage. The King said to him, "By-and-by; by-and-by."—Marron waited; the King returned, sent for him into his apartments, spoke with him a

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1 *La garde-robe*.—"An ounce of civet, good apothecary."

quarter of an hour, received his request, and promised everything for which he petitioned.—Never, no, never will subaltern influence decline; footmen will be all-puissant. Welner has publicly obtained the surname of *Viceroy*, or of *Petty King*.

The Monarch has written to the general of the gendarmes (Pritwitz), noticing that several of his officers played at games of chance; that these games were forbidden; that he should renew the prohibitions under pain of being sent to the fortress for the first offence, and of being broken for the second. The information and the threat were meant at the General himself, who has lost much money with the Duke of Mecklenburg.

It is affirmed that the Duke of Brunswick will be here from the eighth to the fifteenth of January. But Archimedes himself demanded a point of support, and I see none of any kind at Berlin. There are numerous wishes, but not one will; and the wishes themselves are incoherent, contradictory, and rash; he does not know, nor will he ever know, how to connect a single link in the chain; he will more especially never know how to lop off the parasitical and avaricious

sucker. Agriculture is what is most necessary to be encouraged, particularly as soon as commercial oppression shall be renounced; though this oppression has hitherto been productive of gold, thanks to the situation of the Prussian states. But how may agriculture be encouraged in a country where the half of the peasants are attached to the glebe? For so they are in Pomerania, Prussia, and in other parts.

It would be a grand operation in the royal domains, were they divided into small farms, as has so long since been done by the great landholders in England. It is a subject of much greater importance than regulations of trade; but there are so many interested people to be controverted, and the habit of servitude is so rooted, that strength of understanding, energy and consistency, not one grain of which I can find here, are necessary to make the attempt. More knowledge likewise is requisite than will here be found, for a long time to come, for it to be supposed that there is no town, no province, which would not most gladly consent to pay the King much more than the neat revenue he at



present obtains, if he would suffer the inhabitants to assess themselves; taking care, however, continually to watch over the assessments, that the magistrates and the nobles might not oppress the people; or for it to be imagined that the subject would not gain three-fourths of the expenses of collecting, and would be free of all those unworthy restraints which are at present imposed upon them by the fiscal treasury.

It is also necessary to recollect that it is not here as with us, where the body, the mass, of national wealth is so great, because of the excellence of the soil and the climate, the correspondence between the provinces, &c., &c., that we may cut as close as we will, provided we do not erect kilns to burn up the grass; and that in France the expenses of collecting only need be diminished; that no other relief is necessary; nay, that we may still prodigiously increase the load, provided that load be well poised.—Here, two or three provinces at the utmost excepted, the basis is so narrow and the soil so little fruitful, so damp, so impoverished, that it is only for tutelary authority to perform the

greatest part of all which can reconcile Nature to this her neglected offspring. The division of the domains itself, an operation so productive of every kind of resource, requires very powerful advances; for the farmer's stock and the implements of husbandry are, perhaps, those which, when wanting, the arm can least supply.

Independent of this grand point of view, we must not forget THE MILITARY POWER, which must here be respected, for here there are neither Alps nor Apennines, rivers nor seas, for ramparts; here, therefore, with six millions of inhabitants, Government is desirous, and, to a certain point, is obliged, to maintain two hundred thousand men in arms. In war there are no other means than those of courage or of obedience, and obedience is an innate idea in the *serf* peasant; for which reason, perhaps, the grand force of the Prussian army consists in the union of the feudal and military systems. Exclusive of that vast consideration, which I shall elsewhere develop, let me add it will not be sufficient here to act like such or such a Russian or Polish lord, and say, "You are enfranchised," for the serfs here will reply, "We

are very much obliged to you for your enfranchisement, but we do not choose to be free"; or even to bestow lands gratuitously on them, for they will answer, "What would you have us do with lands?"<sup>1</sup> Proprietors and property can only be erected by making advances, and advances are expensive; and, as there are so few governments which have the wisdom to sow in order that they may reap, this will not be the first to begin.

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1 It is a melancholy truth that such is, and indeed such must necessarily be, the spirit of serf peasants; nay, in Russia this error is more rooted than in Prussia. The peasants have no examples of the possibility of existing in a state of independence: they think themselves certain of an asylum against hunger and old age in the domains of their tyrants, and, if enfranchised, would imagine themselves abandoned to an inhospitable world (which indeed, locally speaking, they would be), in which they must be exposed to perish with cold and hunger. Men in a body must be led to act from motives of interest, which, when well understood, are the best of motives. Nothing would be more easy than to convince the peasantry of the largest empire, in a few years, of what their true interest, and the true interest of all parties, is, were not the majority of men, unfortunately, incapable of looking far beyond the trifling wants and the paltry passions of the moment. It is a melancholy consideration that so many ages must yet revolve before truths so simple shall be universally known, even now that the divine art of printing is discovered.

It is little probable that the morning of wholesome politics should first break upon this country.

At present it is almost publicly known that the Count d'Esterno is to depart in the month of April for France. I shall submit it to your delicacy, and to your justice, to pronounce whether I can remain here the overseer of a chargé d'affaires. During his absence, functions might be bestowed on me; here I certainly would not remain under an envoy *per intérim*; nor would this require more than the simple precaution of sending me secret credentials. But, as no such thing will be done, you will perceive that this is a new and very strong reason for my departure about that time. Those who would make me nothing more than a gazetteer are ill acquainted with mankind; and still more so those who hope to oblige me to consent tacitly or perforce.

Postscript.—The Count de Masanne, a fervent mystic, is the grand master of the Queen's household. Welner supped with her yesterday, and had the place of honour; that is to say, he sat opposite her. If he cede to wishes of such indecent vanity, he will presently be undone.

## LETTER LX

*December 30th, 1786.*

YESTERDAY was a memorable moment for the man of observation. Count Bruhl, a Catholic, a foreigner, assuming his rank in the Prussian army, was installed in his place of Governor, and the capitation tax was intimated. This capitation, so openly contemned, supported with so much obstinacy, demonstrated to be vicious in its principle, impossible of execution, and barren in product, at once announces the disgraceful inanity of the General Directory, by which it was loudly opposed, and the sovereign influence of the subaltern by whom its chiefs have been resisted. How can we suppose the King has been deceived respecting the public opinion of an operation so universally condemned? How may he be excused, since his ministers themselves have informed him that he was in danger of, perhaps for ever, casting from him, at the very commencement of his reign, the

title of well-beloved, of which he was so ambitious? Here we at least behold the ambiguous morning of a cloudy reign.

The Queen is not satisfied with the choice that has been made of Count Bruhl, neither is she with the regulations of her household, and therefore she is again contracting debts. She is only allowed, for expenses of every kind, fifty-one thousand crowns per annum. It will be difficult for her to make this sum supply her real wants, her generous propensities, and her numerous caprices. Blind to the amours of the King, she can see the disorder of his domestic affairs. The day before yesterday there was no wood for the fires of her apartments. Her house steward entreated the steward of the royal palace to lend him his assistance. The latter excused himself because of the smallness of his remaining stock. How, you will ask, can disorder so indecent happen? Because the quantity consumed was regulated by the late King, on the supposition that the Queen and her children resided at Potsdam. Since his death no person has thought of the necessary addition. Such incidents, trifling as they are in themselves,

prove to what excess carelessness and the defects of inconsistency are carried.

Count Bruhl was waited for in order to furnish the house of the Princes. As he is overwhelmed by debts, and as a Saxon nobleman ruined, it was requisite the King should cause the sum of twenty thousand crowns to be paid at Dresden, to satisfy the most impatient of his creditors. Opinions concerning him are divided. The only points on which people are unanimous are, that he is one of the flock of the elect (the mystics), and that he plays exceedingly well on the violin. Those who have been acquainted with him fifteen years ago speak in raptures of his amenity. Those whose knowledge of him is more recent are silent. Those who are totally unacquainted with him say he is the most amiable of men. His pupil smiles when he is praised. It is affirmed that the Grand Duke has sent him here, and that it is his intention to take him to himself whenever he shall have the power.

The Prince Royal will soon be worthy the trouble of observation; not merely because Frederick II. drew his horoscope in the follow-

ing terms—"I shall reign again in him," for perhaps he only meant by that to testify his contempt for the present King; but because all things in him proclaim greatness, but ungraciousness of character; awkwardness, but a speaking countenance; unpolished, but sincere. He asks the wherefore of everything, nor will he ever be satisfied with a reply that is not reasonable. He is severe and tenacious, even to ferocity, and yet is not incapable of affection and sensibility. He already knows how to esteem and contemn. His disdain of his father approaches hatred, which he is not very careful to conceal. His veneration of the late King partakes of idolatry, and this he proclaims. Perhaps the youth is destined to great actions; and, should he become the engine of some memorable revolution, men who can see to a distance will not be surprised.

Launay at length departs; and, as I believe, solely from the fear which the ministry, or rather which Welner, has that the King should, in some weary or embarrassed moment, restore him to his place. His dismissal has been granted him only on condition that he would give up twenty-



five thousand crowns of arrears, which are his due. This is a shameful piece of knavery. They have exacted an oath from him that he will not carry off any papers that relate to the State. This is pitiable weakness. For of what validity is such an oath? He may afford you some useful, or rather curious, annotations. In other respects, the man is nothing, less than nothing. He does not so much as suspect the elements of his own trade. His speech is perplexed, his ideas are confused; in a word, he could only act a great part in a country where he had neither judges nor rivals. But he is not, as he is accused of being, a malicious person. He is a very weak and a very vain man, and nothing more. He has acted the part of an executioner, no doubt; but where is the financier who has not? Where would be the justice of demanding the hangman to be racked because of the tortures he had inflicted in pursuance of the sentence which the judge had pronounced?

He will predict deficiencies in the revenue, and in this he will not be wrong; but he perhaps will not inform you, although it is exceedingly

true, that economical principles, which are the guardians of this country, are already very sensibly on the decline. The service is more expensive, the houses of princes more numerous, the stables are better filled, pensions are multiplied, arrangements more costly, salaries of ambassadors almost doubled, the manners more elegant, &c. The greatest part of these expenses was necessary. The real misfortune is that there is no care taken for the proportionate increase of the revenue by slow, but certainly productive, means; and that they seem not to suppose there will be any deficiency, which will at length make an immense error in the sum total; so that, without war, a long reign may see the end of the treasury, should the present measures be pursued. It is not the prodigality of pomp which excites murmurs. It is a prodigality in contrast to the personal avarice of the King which is to be dreaded. It is an insensible, but a continual wasting. Hitherto the evil is inconsiderable, and, no doubt, does not strike any person; but I begin to understand the country in the whole, and I perceive these things more distinctly than I can describe.

It was a custom with the late King, every year, on the twenty-fourth of December, to make presents to his brothers and sisters, the whole sum of which amounted to about twenty thousand crowns. This custom the nephew has suppressed. A habitude of forty years had led the uncles to consider these gratuities as a part of their income; nor did they expect that they should have *set* the first examples, or rather have *been made* the first examples, of economy. Faithful to his peculiar mode of making presents, the King has gratified the Duke of Courland with a yellow riband. It would be difficult more unworthily to prostitute his order.

To this sordidness of metal, and this debauchery of moral, coin, examples of easy prodigality may be opposed. The house of the Jew Ephraim had paid two hundred thousand crowns, on account, for the late King, at Constantinople, during the Seven Years' War. The money was intended to corrupt some Turks, but the project failed. Frederick II. continually delayed the repayment of the sum. His successor yesterday reimbursed the heirs of Ephraim.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is curious to read, in the "History of the Seven

A saddler who had thirty years been the creditor of the late King, who never would pay the debts he had contracted while Prince Royal, demanded the sum of three thousand crowns from his present Majesty. The King wrote at the bottom of the petition—"Pay the bill at sight, with interest at six per cent."

The Duke of Holsteinbeck is at length to go to Königsberg, to take command of a battalion of grenadiers. I have elsewhere depicted this insignificant Prince, who will be a boy at sixty, and who will neither do harm to the enemies of the State nor good to his private friends.

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Years' War" (Chap. ix.), the account which this conscientious King gives of the *corruption* he attempted and the profusion with which he scattered the money of the uncircumcised Jew, but whom he takes good care never to mention. It was the treasure of *the State*, and the State, with all its goods and chattels, flocks and herds, biped and quadruped, serfs and Jews included, were his—for "was he not every inch a king?"

## LETTER LXI

*January 1st, 1787.*

THE King has lately bestowed his order on four of his subjects. The one is the keeper of his treasury (M. von Blumenthal), a faithful but a dull minister. The second is the master of his horse,<sup>1</sup> M. von Schwerin, a silly buffoon under the late King, a cypher during his whole life, a perplexed blockhead, and on whom the first experiment that was made, after the accession, was to deprive him of his place. The third is His Majesty's governor, a man of eighty, who has been kept at a distance for these eighteen years past, and who is destitute of talents, service, dignity, and esteem for his pupil, which perhaps is the first mark of good sense he ever betrayed. The last, who is not yet named, is Count Bruhl, who is thus rewarded by titles, after receiving the most effective gratifications before he has exercised any office. What a prostitution of

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<sup>1</sup> *Grand écuyer.*

honours! I say, what a prostitution; for the prodigality with which they are bestowed is itself prostitution.

Among others who have received favours, a mystic priest is distinguished; a preacher of effrontery, who reposes on the couch of gratifications, at the expense of two thousand crowns. To him add Baron Boden, driven from Hesse-Cassel, a spy of the police at Paris, known at Berlin to be a thief, a pickpocket, a forger, capable of everything except that which is honest, and of whom the King himself said he is a rascal, yet on whom he has bestowed a chamberlain's key. Pensions innumerable have been granted to obscure or infamous courtiers. The Academicians, Welner and Moulinés, are appointed directors of the finances of the Academy.

All these favours announce a Prince without judgment, without delicacy, without esteem either for himself or his favours; reckless of his own fame, or of the opinion of the public; and as proper to discourage those who possess some capacity as to embolden such as are natively nothing, or worse than nothing.

The contempt of the people is the merited salary of so many good works; and this contempt is daily more pointed: the stupor by which it was preceded is now no more. The world was at first astonished to see the King faithful to his comedy, faithful to his concert, faithful to his old mistress, faithful to his new one, finding time to examine engravings, furniture, the shops of tradesmen, to play on the violoncello, to enquire into the tricks of the ladies of the palace, and seeking for moments to attend to ministers, who debate in his hearing on the interests of the State. But at present astonishment is incited if some new folly or some habitual sin has not consumed one of his days.

The new uniforms invented by His Majesty have this day made their appearance. This military bauble, prepared for the day on which men have the ridiculous custom of making a show of themselves, confirms the opinion that the sovereign who annexes so much importance to such a circumstance, possesses that kind of understanding which induces him to believe that parading is a thing of consequence.

Is his heart better than his understanding?  
Of this men begin to doubt.

Count Alexander Wartensleben, a former favourite of the present King, who was imprisoned at Spandau for his fidelity to him, being sent for from the farther part of Prussia to Berlin, to command the guards, has lately been placed at the head of a Brandenburg regiment; and by this arrangement he loses a pension of a hundred guineas, which was granted him by the King while Prince Royal. This frank and honest officer is a stranger to the sect in favour; and, after having languished in a kind of forgetfulness, finally receives a treatment which neither can be called disgrace nor reward. This is generally considered as a deplorable proof that the King, to say the least, neither knows how to love nor hate.

Mademoiselle Voss has been persuaded that it would be more generous in her to prevent her lover committing a folly than to profit by such folly; for thus is the marriage publicly called, which would have become a subject of eternal reproach whenever the intoxication of passion should have slumbered. The beauty, therefore, will



be made a countess, become rich, and perhaps the sovereign of the will of the Sovereign, but not his spouse. Her influence may be productive of great changes, and in other countries might render Count Schulemburg, the son-in-law of Count Finckenstein, first minister. He has acted very wisely in attaching Struensee to himself, who teaches him his trade with so much perspicuity that the Count imagines his trade is learned. He has beside an exercised understanding, and an aptitude to industry, order, consistency, and energy. Aided by his tutor, he will find no difficulties too great; and he is the man necessary for this King, whose will is feeble and cowardly. The late King was equally averse to men of many difficulties, but it was from a conviction of his own superiority. Great talents, however, are little necessary to reign over your men of Topinamboo.

The memorial against the capitation tax, which has been signed by Messieurs Hertzberg, Heinitz, Arnim, and Schulemburg, concludes with these words:—"This operation, which alarms all classes of your Majesty's subjects, effaces in their hearts the epithet of *well-beloved*, and freezes the forti-

tude of those whom you have appointed to your council." Struensee, on his part, has sent in two pages of figures, which demonstrate the miscalculations that will infallibly be discovered when the tax has been collected. Messieurs Werder, Gaudi, and probably Welner, persist; and the King, who neither has the power to resist a plurality of voices, nor that of receding, dares not yet decide.

On the fifteenth of February, he is to depart for Potsdam, where he proposes to continue the remainder of the year; that period excepted when he journeys into Silesia and Prussia.

Postscript — *Evening*. — The King has to-day advanced the Duke of Brunswick to the rank of field-marshal. This is indubitably the first honourable choice he has made; and everybody approves his having singly promoted this prince.

*January 2nd.*

The Dutch Envoy has thrown me into a state of great embarrassment, and into astonishment not less great. He has asked me, in explicit terms, whether I consented that endeavours should be made to procure me credentials to treat with

the Princess of Orange, at Nimeguen. If deception might be productive of anything, I should have imagined he only wished to induce me to speak; but the question was accompanied with so many circumstances, all true and sincere, so many confidential communications of every kind, and a series of anecdotes so rational and so decisive, that, though I might find it difficult to account for the whim he had taken, I could not possibly doubt of the candour of the envoy. After this first consideration, I hesitated whether I should mention the affair to you, from a fear that the presumption should be imputed to me of endeavouring to rival M. de Renneval; but, besides that my cypher will pass under the inspection of my prudent friend, before it will fall into the hands of the King or his ministers, and that I shall thus be certain he will erase whatever might injure me to no purpose, I have imagined it was not a part of my duty to pass over a proposition of so singular a kind in silence. I ought to add farther, referring to the ample details which I shall give, after the long conference which I am to have with him to-morrow morning, that, if

France has no latent intention, and means only to weaken the Stadtholder, in such a manner as that his influence cannot hereafter be of service to the English, the patriots are by no means so simple in their intentions. I have proofs that, from the year 1784 to the end of 1785, they were in secret correspondence with Baron Reede; and that they ceased precisely at the moment when the Baron wrote to them:—"Make your proposals; I have a *carte blanche* from the Princess, and, on this condition, the King of Prussia will answer for the Prince."—I have also proofs that M. de Renneval cannot succeed, and that the affair will never be brought to a conclusion, "so long as negotiation shall be continued instead of arbitration." These are his words, and they appear to me remarkable. It is equally evident that the implacable vengeance of the Duke de la Vauguyon arises, from his having dared to make love to the Princess, and his love having been rejected. I shall leave those who are able to judge of the veracity of these allegations; but it is my duty to repeat verbally the following phrase of Baron Reede:—"M. de Calonne is inimical to us,

and his enemy opens his arms to receive us. What is it that M. de Calonne wishes? Is it to be minister of foreign affairs? A successful pacification of the troubles of Holland would render him more service, in such case, than the continuation of those troubles, which may kindle a general conflagration. I demand a categorical answer to the following question: Should it be proved to M. de Calonne that the Stadtholder is in reality come over to the side of France, or, which is the same thing, if he shall be obliged to come over, will he then be against us? Has he any private interest which we counteract? Is it impossible he should explain himself? The chances certainly are all in his favour against M. de Breteuil, whom we have continually hated and despised. Wherefore will he spoil his own game?"

I necessarily answered these questions in terms rather vague. I informed him that M. de Calonne, in what related to foreign affairs, continually pursued the line marked out by M. de Vergennes; that the former, far from coveting the place of the latter, would support him with all his power, if, which could not happen, he had need

of his support; that a comptroller-general never could be desirous of anything but peace and political tranquillity; that whether M. de Calonne had or had not particular agents in Holland, was a fact of which I was ignorant (this Baron Reede positively assured me was the case, and probably was the reason of his afterwards conceiving the idea of making me their substitute); but that he would suppose me a madman, should I speak to him of such a thing; and therefore if, as seemed very improbable, it were true that the Princess of Orange, on the recommendation of Baron Reede, should be capable of placing any confidence in me, it was necessary she should give this to be understood, through some medium with which I should be unacquainted; as for example, by the way of Prussia; but it scarcely could be supposed that there would be any wish of substituting a person unknown in that walk to those who were already in the highest repute.

Baron Reede persisted, and further added, not to mention that M. de Renneval could not long remain in his station, the parties would undoubtedly come to a better understanding when

the Princess could speak with confidence; that confidence was a sensation which could not be commanded, and which she never could feel for this negotiator.—In fine, he demanded, under the seal of profound secrecy, a conference with me, which I did not think it would be right to refuse; and his whole conversation perfectly demonstrated two things: the first, that his party supposes M. de Calonne is totally their enemy, and that he is the minister of influence in this political conflict; and the second, that they believed him to be deceived. I am the more persuaded these suppositions are true, because he very strongly insisted, even should I not receive any orders to repair to Holland, I should pass through Nimeguen, on my return to Paris; that, by the aid of the pledges of confidence which I should receive from him, I might sufficiently penetrate the thoughts of the Princess, so as to be able to render M. de Calonne a true report of the situation of affairs, and what might be the basis of a sincere and stable conciliation. It is not, therefore, so much another person, instead of M. de Renneval, that they desire, as another Couette Toury, or some

particular confidant of M. de Calonne. I shall conclude with two remarks that are perhaps important.

I. My sentiments and principles concerning liberty are so known that I cannot be regarded as one of the Orange party. There is, therefore, a real desire of accommodation at Nimeguen. And would not the success of this accommodation be of greater consequence to M. de Calonne than the machinations of M. de Breteuil? Wherefore will he not have the merit of the pacification, if it be necessary? And is it not in a certain degree necessary, in the present political state of Europe?

II. The province of Friseland has ever been of the Anti- Stadtholder party, and it now begins to be on better terms with the Prince. Is it not because there has been the ill address of attacking the Stadtholder in some part hostile to the provinces, and in which neither the nobility nor the regencies do, or can, wish to see the Constitution absolutely overthrown? Has not the province of Holland drawn others too far into its particular measures?

These two considerations, which I can support by a number of corroborating circumstances, per-



haps are worthy the trouble of being weighed. I shall send you, by the next courier, the result of our conference; but, if there are any orders, information or directions, to be given me on the subject, it is necessary not to leave me in suspense; for my situation relative to Reede is embarrassing, since I dare neither to repel nor invite advances, which most assuredly I never shall provoke, and which, by the well-avowed state of the Cabinet of Potsdam, it was even impossible I should provoke, had I been possessed of so much temerity.

Noldé has already written several letters to me from Courland, and mentions an important despatch in cypher, which is to be sent by the next courier. But the evident result is that it is too late to save Courland; that everything which ought to have been prevented is done, or as good as done; and that the best physicians would but lose their time in prescribing for the incurable. The bearer of the letter, which occasioned the departure of Noldé, is a merchant of Liebau, named Immermann. He has been charged with the negotiation of a loan in Holland and

elsewhere; but, as it is said, has met with no success. It is supposed in the country that the Duke has thrown impediments in its way. The Diet of Courland is to sit in January. It is worthy of remark that, for two years past, no delegate has been sent from Courland to Warsaw.

Good information is said to be received that four corps of Russian troops have begun their march, purposely to approach the Crimea at the time that the Empress shall be there; and this not so much to inspire the Turks with fear, as to remove the greatest and most formidable part of the military from the vicinage of Petersburg and the northern provinces of Russia; and especially from the Grand Duke, that there may not be any possibility of dangerous or vexatious events; for the unbounded love of the Russians for their Grand Duke is apprehended. Yet, if such terrors are felt, wherefore undertake so useless a journey, which will cost from seven to eight millions of roubles? So useless, I say, according to your opinions, for, according to mine, the Empress believes she is going to Constantinople, or she does not intend to depart.

The troops are to be divided into four corps, of forty thousand men each. The General of these armies will be the Field-marshal Potemkin, who will have the immediate command of a corps of forty thousand men, and the superintendence of the others who are under him, to be led by Generals Elvut, Michaelssohn, and Soltikow. Prince Potemkin has under his particular and independent orders sixty thousand irregular troops in the Crimea. It is whispered he entertains the project of making himself King of the country, and of a good part of the Ukraine.

## LETTER LXII

*January 4th, 1787.*

My conference with Baron Reede is over. It continued three hours and a-half, and I have not the smallest remaining doubt concerning his intentions, after the confidence with which he spoke and the writings he showed me. He appears to be a good citizen, a constitutionalist by principle, a friend of liberty by instinct, loyal and true from character and habit, and rather the servant of the Princess of Orange from personal affection than from the place he holds under her husband; a person desirous of ending tumultuous and disquieting debates, because in pacification he contemplates the good of his country, and that of the Princess, whose confidence he possesses. He is, further, a minister of passable talents, who has abstained from making advances so long as he presumed our political management of the Court of Prussia would greatly influence its intervention, and that he might prevail on that Court to speak firmly.

At present, feeling that the respect in which the Cabinet of Berlin was held is on the decline, and especially perceiving the King is disinterested in the affairs of the Stadtholder, because he has no interest in anything, he knocks immediately at the door of reconciliation.

You may hold the following as probabilities :

I. That the Princess, who will finally decide what the catastrophe is to be, at least in a very great measure, is, to a certain point, desirous of accommodation, and to throw herself into the arms of France, because that, in fine, she dreads risking a stake too great, to the injury of her family.

II. That she imagines M. de Calonne to be the minister who influences the mind of the King, and the personal enemy of her house.

III. That successful attempts have been made to inspire her with very strong prejudices against his sincerity.

IV. That still she seeks his friendship, and is desirous of a correspondence with him, either direct or indirect ; and of an impartial trusty friend in Holland, who should possess her confidence.

CHARLES GRAVIER, COMTE DE  
VERGENNES

*From a painting of the eighteenth century, in the  
gallery of Versailles*









V. That not only nothing is more possible than to retouch the regulations, without some modifications in which the influence of the Stadtholder cannot be repressed, but that this is what they expect, secretly convinced of its justice, and politically of its necessity; and that Baron Reede, as a citizen, and one of the first of the first rank, would be much vexed were they not retouched.

The reason of the sincere return of the Princess of Orange, who indeed was never entirely alienated, is that she seriously despairs of being efficaciously served at Berlin.

That of her opinion of the enmity of M. de Calonne is solely founded on his intimate connection with the Rhingrave of Salm, which the latter exaggerates; and the inconsiderate discourse of M. de C——, which really surpasses all imagination, and who is supposed to be the particular intimate of the minister.

Her prejudices against M. de Calonne arise, in a great part, from the calumny spread by one Vandermey, who had formed I know not what enterprise on Bergue-Saint-Vinox (while this minister was intendent of the province), in which

he failed in such a manner as to cost the Stadtholder more than a hundred and sixty thousand florins; and, that he might excuse himself, he threw the whole blame on the opposition made by M. de Calonne. Add further, that all these causes of discontent, suspicion and animosity, are still kept in fermentation by a M. de Portail, the creature of M. de Breteuil, the which M. de Portail equally blames M. de Veirac, M. de C——, the Rhingrave of Salm, M. de Renneval, the Count de Vergennes, and all that has been done, all that is done, and all that shall be done; but especially M. de Calonne, whom he depicts as the incendiary of the Seven Provinces, which, with all Europe besides, cannot be saved but by the meekness of M. de Breteuil, the gentle, the polished, the pacificator.

With respect to the desire of the Princess to be on better terms with M. de Calonne, it is, I think, evident. Baron Reede is too circumspect and too artful to have taken such a step with me had he not been authorised. What follows will, perhaps, give you the genealogy of his ideas, which may sufficiently explain the whole episode. He

could easily know that I wrote in cypher. He is the intimate friend of Hertzberg. And for whom do I cypher? Whoever is acquainted with the coast and the progress of our affairs must know it can only be for M. de Calonne. On what principle do I act? The Duke of Brunswick, who has had many conferences with him, cannot have left him in ignorance that my views on this subject were all for peace. Having been totally disappointed through the ignorance of Count d'Esterno, which he affirms is complete in this respect, and which must, therefore, on this subject, redouble the native surliness of the Count; and by the stupidity of F——, who painfully comes to study his lesson with him, and returning does not always repeat it faithfully; well convinced that the influence of Count Hertzberg is null, the affection of the King cooled, and the credit of his Cabinet trifling, the Baron has proposed to the Princess to make this experiment.

With respect to her consent, whether express or tacit, and her serious determination to retouch the regulations, of this I have seen proofs in the letters of the Princess, and read them in the

cypher or the Princess (for it will be well to know that she is very laborious, cyphers and decyphers herself, and with her own hand indites answers to all the writings of the contrary party), as I have done in those of Larrey and of Linden.

I did not think myself justified in disregarding such overtures. After having said everything possible in favour of M. de Calonne, his views, projects and connections—(nor, I confess, do I believe that the manner in which I am devoted to him left me at this moment without address)—after having treated as I ought the perfidious duplicity of M. de Breteuil and his agents, and after having uttered what I thought on the prudence of M. de Vergennes, the delicate probity of the King, and the undoubted politics of our Cabinet, which certainly are to render the Stadtholder subservient to the public good, and the independence of the United Provinces, but which cannot be to procure his expulsion, it was agreed that I should write the day after to-morrow to demand a categorical answer from M. de Calonne, to know whether he wishes to begin a correspondence, direct or indirect, with the Princess; and whether he con-

sents any propositions for accommodation should be made him, for rendering which effectual his personal word should be accepted, when they shall be agreed on, and to an honourable pacification in behalf of the Stadtholder, suitable to the Sovereign.

Baron Reede, on his part, who is cautious, and wished to appear to act totally from himself, wrote to the Princess to inform her that this step was taken at his instigation, and to demand her prompt and formal authority to act. We are to meet to-morrow on horseback in the park that we may reciprocally show each other our minutes ; it being certainly well understood that neither of us is to show the other more than the ostensible minutes we shall have prepared ; and the whole is to depart on Saturday ; because, said he, as not more than twelve or thirteen days were necessary for him to have an answer, this would be time enough, before yours should arrive, for us to form the proposed plan—at least, so far as to establish confidence.

This is the faithful abstract of our conversation. With respect to the propositions, I had

only to listen; and as to the reflections, I have only to apologize. Should you be tempted to suppose I have been too forward in accepting the proposal to write, I beg the incident may be weighed, and that I may be informed how it may be possible, at the distance of six hundred leagues, ever to be successful, if I am never to exceed my literal instructions. And after all, what new information have I given the Baron? Who here, who is concerned in diplomatic affairs, has any doubt that I cypher? And on what subjects do men cypher? Is it philosophy, literature, or politics? Neither have I told of what kind my business is; and my constant formulæ have been—I shall endeavour—I shall find some mode—I shall take an opportunity of letting M. de Calonne know, &c.

At present, send me orders either to recede or to advance; and in the latter case give me instructions; for I have only hitherto been able to divine, and that the more vaguely because, as you must easily feel, it was necessary I should appear to the Baron to be better informed than I really am, and consequently to ask fewer questions than

I should otherwise have done. Ask yourself what advantages might I not obtain, were I not obliged to have recourse entirely to my own poor stock.

In brief, what pledges do you desire of the sincerity of the Princess? What proofs of friendship will you afford her? What precaution do you require for the good conduct of the Stadtholder? What kind of restraints do you mean to lay him under? Will you in nothing depart from what was stipulated in the commission of the 27th of February, 1766? What are the modifications you propose? Must mediation be necessarily and formally accepted? Is it not previously requisite that the provinces of Guelderland and Utrecht should send their troops into their respective quarters? Will the province of Holland then narrow her military line? In this supposition, is there nothing to be feared from the Free Corps? and how may she answer for them? What will be the determinate constitutional functions of the Stadtholder? What the relations of subordination and influence towards the deputy counsellors? What is the reformation intended to be made in the regulations?



These, and a thousand other particulars, are of consequence to me, if I am to be of any service in the business; otherwise I need none of them. But it is to me indispensable that you should immediately and precisely inform me how I ought to act and speak, how far I am to go, and where to stop.

Be kind enough to observe that it is requisite this step should be kept entirely secret from Count d'Esterno, and that the intentions and proceedings of Baron Reede certainly do not merit that the Baron should be betrayed.

A curious and very remarkable fact is that the Duke of Brunswick was the first who spoke to Baron Reede of the Prussian troops being put in motion, and asked him what effect he imagined it would have on the affairs of Holland if some regiments of cavalry were marched into, and, should it be needful, if a camp were formed in, the principality of Cleves, which might be called a camp of pleasure. Baron Reede replied this was a very delicate step, and it was scarcely possible the Cabinet of Versailles could remain an unconcerned spectator. Does the Duke desire to

be prime minister, be the event what it may? And has he unworthily deceived me? Or was it only his intention to acquire from Baron Reede such information as might aid him to combat the proposition of Count Hertzberg? The Dutch ambassador wished to persuade me of the first. I imagine he is sincere; yet, to own the truth, the public would echo his opinion, for the Duke is in high renown for deceit. But here I ought to oppose the testimony of Count Hertzberg himself, who owned that the idea was his own, and who bitterly repeated, more than once, "Ah! had not the Duke deserted me!" It is necessary to have heard the expression and the accent to form any positive opinion on the subject, which to a certain point may be warranted.

*January 5th.*

I found Baron Reede at the rendezvous, in the same temper of mind; and, if possible, more fervent, more zealous. The only delicacy in acting he required was that I should not say he had written; in order, as he observed, that, should these advances still fail in their effect, a greater

animosity might not be the result. He related to me an example of this kind, concerning the success of a confidential proceeding which happened, some years ago, between himself and M. de Gaussin, at that time chargé d'affaires from France to Berlin, and who, having described the business in terms too ardent to be accurate, receives a ministerial answer from M. de Vergennes, of the most kind and amicable complexion, which, passing directly to the Stadtholder, through the medium of the Cabinet of Berlin, was by no means found acceptable, as it might reasonably have been supposed it would have been; and that this produced an additional degree of coldness. True it is that the Prince of Orange had not, at that time, experienced the strength of his opponents; but this Prince is so passionate, and his mind is so perverse, that the Princess herself is obliged to take the utmost precautions when she has anything to communicate.

I promised Baron Reede to act entirely as he wished; yet have not thought it the less my duty to relate the whole affair, well convinced that people only of very narrow minds pique

themselves on their policy; that M. de Calonne will think proper to know nothing of all this, except just as much as he ought to know; that in any case he will seem only to regard this overture as the simple attempt of two zealous men, who communicated a project which they supposed was most probable of success. In reality, though it may be the most pressing interest of the Stadtholder to obtain peace, how can our alliance with Holland be more effectually strengthened than by the concurrence of the Stadtholder? And with respect to the individual interests of M. de Calonne, should we happen to lose M. de Vergennes, through age or ill-health, who is there capable of disputing the place with him, who shall have promoted the commercial treaty between France and England, and have accomplished the pacification of Holland? Enough at present concerning the business in which I am engaged. Let us return to Prussia.

*January 6th.*

Lieutenant-colonel Goltz has long been on cold terms, and even has quarrelled, with Bishops-

werder. They had once been reconciled by the King, who felt that the first, being more firm of character, and more enterprising, had great advantages in the execution of affairs over the other, who was more the courtier, and more the humble servant of circumstances. To avoid domestic scandal, he has appointed M. von Hanstein, who possesses dignity, or rather haughtiness ; and M. von Pritwitz, a man of mediocrity, and a victim to the caprices of the late King, to be general aides-de-camp. Thus Bishopswerder, after he has done everything in his power to remove all who had more understanding than himself from about the person of the King, having accomplished his purpose, and secured the Monarch solely to himself, knows not what he shall do with him.

Count Bruhl has found neither arrangements ready prepared, apartments furnished, nor persons placed in the service of the Prince Royal. The consequences were—Ill-humour—A visit to Welner—Not admitted—Visit returned late, and by a card—Rising discontent, which is encouraged by Bishopswerder, who suspects Welner to have been

softened concerning the nomination of the two general aides-de-camp.

A fact which appears very probable is that Welner, who is christened by the people The Little King, knows not how to perform three offices at once; and, as he foolishly believed he might yield to the eagerness of speculators, and has had the meanness to enjoy the despicable flatteries of those who six months ago treated him like a lackey, his days have glided away in these perilous pastimes of vanity. Business has been neglected, everything is in arrear, and it is presumed that, when he shall have been sufficiently bandied by the intrigues of the malcontents, the ingratitude of those whom he shall have served, the arts of courtiers, and the snares of his own subalterns, his brain will be entirely turned.

It is at length determined the capitation tax shall not be enforced. Thus it is withdrawn after having been announced! Without conviction! Without a substitute!—What confusion! What forebodings! From the short prospect of the morning of the reign, how portentous are the steps of futurity!

The sending an envoy to London; which Court has not yet returned the compliment.

Another envoy sent to Holland, who, in every step he has taken, has risked the reputation of his Sovereign. It certainly was necessary either to act consistently, or totally to abstain from acting.

The commission of enquiry on the administration of the finances, which has been productive of nothing but injustice and rigour toward individuals, without the least advantage to the public.

Another commission to examine the conduct of General Wartenberg, appointed with ostentation, and suspended in silence.

The suppression of the administration of tobacco and snuff, which must be continued.

The project of the capitation tax, which is obliged to be withdrawn at the very moment it was to commence.

The convocation of the principal merchants of Prussia and Silesia, which has generated nothing but discussion, such as are proper to unveil the absurdity of the rulers, and the wretchedness of the people.

Do not so many false steps, so many reced-

ings, suppose administrators who have reflected but little, who are groping in the dark, and who are ignorant of the elements of the science of governing?

Amid this series of follies, we must nevertheless remark a good operation, which is truly beneficial. I speak of the at present unlimited corn trade, and an annual exemption in behalf of that miserable Western Prussia, the amount of which I do not yet know.

The domestic fermentation of the palace begins to be so great that it must soon become public. The agent of the wishes, or, more properly speaking, of the secret whims, is in opposition to Bishopswerder and Welner, who are on cold terms with Mademoiselle Voss, who is desirous that Madam Rietz should be discarded, who will agree that Mademoiselle Voss should be a rich mistress, but not a wife. Among this multitude of opposing wills, where each, except the King, acts for himself, we may enumerate His Majesty's chamberlain, and the counsellor of Mademoiselle Voss, Reuss; and the pacificator, the mediator, the counsellor, the temporizer, the preacher, Count Arnim.



The Sovereign, amid these rising revolts, weathers the storm to the best of his abilities. The jeweller Botson has laid a complaint against Rietz, which occasioned a quarrel that might have had consequences, had not the King recollected that ten years might be necessary to replace a confidant whom he might have discharged in a moment of anger. The birthday of the Count of Brandenburg was likewise a circumstance which the Rietz party made subservient to their interest. His Majesty sent for the mother to dinner, and peace was the restorer of serenity.

The master of the horse, who was said to have lost his credit, appears to have risen from the dead. Exclusive of his yellow riband, which he hung over his shoulders on the last Court day, and which excited bursts of laughter from everybody, even from the ministers, he requested his nephew might be created a count, and was answered with a "So be it." The creating of a count is but a trifling evil, especially when so many have been created; but never to possess a will of one's own is a serious reflection.

Would you wish for a picture of the sinews of

government, and active faculties of the governors? —Take the following feature.

Various remonstrances had been made to the King finally to regulate the state of expenditure, and the salaries of his officers. He replied that he intended to keep a Court; and that, in order to regulate his expenses, he first desired to know the permanent state of his revenues, according as they should be collected and ascertained by his new financiers. After reflecting on various phrases, in all of which was repeated the word *ascertained*, the ministers under whose charge the excise and the daily expenditure were began to have their apprehensions. Hence followed a multitude of trifling taxes, ridiculous, hateful and unproductive, which sprang up in a single night. Oysters, cards, and an increase on the postage of letters, on stamps, on wines, eight groschen per ell on taffeties, thirty-three per cent. on furs. They even went so far as to suppress the franchises of the princes of the household. Not one of these new imposts but was most gratuitously odious; for they retard what they are meant to effect, and are productive of nothing but a demonstration of

the heavy stupidity of those who neither can procure money nor satisfy the public.

Postscript.—I have received a voluminous despatch in cypher from Courland, the contents of which it is impossible I should at present send. I can only confirm former intelligence, that the chamberlain Howen, who is at present Burgrave, disposes of the province, and is wholly Russian; the circumstances by the next courier.

## LETTER LXIII

*January 8th, 1787.*

THE following is the substance of the news from Courland, as authentic as can possibly be procured.

The chamberlain Howen, an able man, the first and the only person of understanding in the country—(for the chancellor Taubé, who might otherwise counterpoise his influence, is destitute of mind and character)—Howen, I say, is become Ober Burgrave, by the sudden death of the prime minister, Klopman. After this event followed a torrent of re-placings and de-placings, in none of which you are interested, and concerning which it will be sufficient for you to know that every recommendation of the Duke has been absolutely rejected and contemned. The Baron of Mest-Machor, the Russian envoy by a formal and direct recommendation, occasioned the election to alight on Howen, who

once was the violent enemy of the Russians, by whom he had been carried off from Warsaw, where he resided as envoy from Courland, and banished into Siberia. Here he remained several years. By a concurrence of circumstances he is become Russian. It appears that the Cabinet of Petersburg has preferred the gaining of its purpose by gentle measures, and intends amicably to accomplish all its designs on Courland. Howen is in reality Duke of Courland, for he executes all the functions of the dukedom, and converts or overawes all opponents. Woronzow, Soltikow, Belsborotko and Potemkin are absolute masters of Courland, as they are of Russia; with this only difference, that Potemkin, who possesses a library of mortgages and bank-bills, who pays nobody, corrupts everybody, who subjects all by the energy of his will and the extent of his views, soars above Belsborotko, who is politically his friend; above Woronzow, who is capable but timid; and above Soltikow, who is wholly devoted to the Grand Duke.

The Duke of Courland will probably return no more to his country, because he has ruined

his affairs in Russia, is unable to alter anything which has been done in his absence, is entangled in lawsuits, and by complaints laid against him without number, and because that the regency, which preserves a good understanding with the chiefs of the equestrian order, under the guidance of Howen, reigns with moderation, conformable to the laws of the land, and brings down benedictions on its administration ; insomuch that the people, who were ready to revolt because they were threatened by, and already were suffering, famine, wish affairs to continue in their present train. It is to them of little import whether the government be or be not Russian, if misery be not entailed on them. There is no possibility of reversing a system thus stable. Some sixty considerable estates have been granted as fiefs or farms. All the vacant places have been bestowed on persons of the greatest influence, abroad and at home ; so that we may say the party of the administration of Howen, or of the Russians in Courland, includes everybody. Several millions must be expended to counterpoise such a preponderance ; and, if to counterpoise were to vanish,

victory itself would not be worth expenses so great.

One of the principal complaints against the Duke is the deterioration of Courland, which has been effected by the total impoverishment of the peasants and the lands, the ruin of the forests, and the exportation of the ducal revenues into foreign countries. But the grand crime, the crime not to be forgiven, is having displeased Russia. The Empress has been so enraged against him, by his anti-Russian proceedings in Courland, that she herself said, "The King of France would not have injured me as the Duke of Courland has dared to do." She probably meant, bestowing Courland on Prussia.

I cannot perceive how we can act better, in our present situation, than to wait with patience. Our young man will certainly have a place in his own country. Should it be thought proper to bestow on him the title of Consul, with leave to wear our uniform, and a captain's commission, from which he might derive respect, he asks nothing more; and we should possess an intelligent, zealous and incorruptible sentinel, who, from so

well-situated a post, might inform us of whatever was passing in the North, and aid us in what relates to commerce.

I need not observe that great changes are not effected in a day. We may, however, depend upon a confirmation of the Maritime Company as a symptomatic anecdote of importance. Struensee has acted in a pleasant manner.—“Gentlemen,” said he, to the merchants of Königsberg and Prussia, “nothing can be more excellent than a free trade; but it is very just that you should buy all the salt in our warehouses.”—“True.”—“Very good. You must, therefore, give us security for one million two hundred thousand crowns, as well as pay a hundred and twenty thousand crowns annually to the proprietors, in return for the ten per cent. for which we are accountable; for public good will not admit an injury to be committed on private right.”—“True.”—“Very good. And, for the same reason, you must pay five per cent., which has been legally granted on the new shares.”—“True.”—“Very excellent, gentlemen. But who are to be your securities? Or, at least, where are your funds?”



—“Oh, we will form a company!”—“A company, gentlemen! One company is as good as another. Why should not the King give the preference to the company that actually exists?”

All projects for the freedom of trade will, like this, go off *in fumo*; and, what is still more fatal, if possible, conclusions will be drawn, from the ignorance of the present administration, in favour of the impossibility of changing former regulations. Such are kings without a will; such is the present, and such will he live and die! The other was all soul; this is all body. The symptoms of his incapacity increase with aggravation. I shall have continual occasion to repeat nearly the same words, the same opinions, the same remarks. But here, however, may be added what I think a fact of weight, which is that one of the causes of the torpor of interior administration is the misunderstanding which reigns in the ministry. Four ministers are in opposition to two, and the seventh remains neuter. Messieurs Gaudi and Werder, who keep shifting the helm of finance, are counteracted by Messieurs Heinitz, Arnim, Schulemburg and Blumenthal. The former of

the four last is accused of attempting to add the department of the mines to that of the finances. In the meantime the expediting of business continues with Welner, and the impulse of influence with Bishopswerder.

The latter, either sincerely or insidiously, has become the associate of the plan to bring Prince Henry again into power, at least in military affairs. The Prince, for several years, has not been present at the manœuvres. It is affirmed that he not only will be this year, but that he will be made a kind of inspector-general. The negotiation is carried on, with great secrecy, by General Moellendorf and the favourite.

The marriage of Mademoiselle Voss is again in report. Certain it is that every species of trinkets has been purchased, every kind of preparation has been made, and that a journey is rumoured.—Most of these circumstances are kept very secret; but I am well assured of their truth, because I have them from the Rietz family, who are very much interested in preventing the union being accomplished, under certain formalities, and who consequently are very actively on

the watch. But I know not what form they will bestow on this half-conjugal, half-concubine state. Yesterday, however, when I supped with the King, I had ocular demonstration there was no longer any restraint laid on speaking together in public.

The King, at supper, asked me, "Who is one M. de Laseau?"—"Du Saux, perhaps, Sire."—"Yes, Du Saux."—"A member of our academy of inscriptions."—"He has sent me a large work on gaming."—"Alas! Sire, you masters of the world only have the power of effecting the destruction of gaming. Our books will accomplish but little."—"But he has embarrassed me by paying me a compliment which I by no means merit."—"There are many, Sire, which you are too prudent to be in haste to merit."—"He has congratulated me on having abolished the Lotto; I wish it were true, but it is not."—"A wish from your Majesty will effect much."—"I am some thanks in your debt, on this subject, for this is one of the good counsels you gave me in a certain writing.<sup>1</sup>—(I made a low bow.)—But you

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<sup>1</sup> Meaning the Memorial.

must excuse me for a time. There are funds assigned on that vile Lotto; the military school, for example.”—“Fortunately, Sire, a momentary deficiency of fifty thousand crowns is not a thing to inspire the richest King on earth, in ready money, with any great apprehensions.”—“True; but agreements——”—“Will not be violated when the parties are reimbursed, or have any proportionate remuneration. Surely, since despotism has so often been employed to do ill, it might for once effect good.”—“Oh, oh! Then you are somewhat reconciled to despotism?”—“Who can avoid being reconciled to it, Sire, where one head has four hundred thousand arms?” He laughed with a simple kind of grin, was informed the comedy was going to begin, and here ended our conversation. You perceive, there is still some desire of being praised in this lethargic soul.

Postscript.—Launay this night departed incognito. I imagine you will give very serious offence to the Cabinet of Berlin if you do not prevent him going to press, as is his intention.

## LETTER LXIV

*January 13th, 1787.*

I BELIEVE I have at length discovered what the Emperor was hatching here. He has, sans circumlocution, proposed to suffer Prussia to appropriate the remainder of Poland to itself, provided he might act in like manner by Bavaria. Fortunately, the bait was too gross. It was perceived he offered the gift of a country which he had not the power to bestow, and the invasion of which would be opposed by Russia, that he might, without impediment, seize on another which had been refused him, and of which, if once acquired, he never after could have been robbed. Your ambassador, probably, has discovered this long before me, from whom you will have learnt the circumstances. To him the discovery was an affair of no difficulty; for confidence is easily placed, in politics, when it is determined that the proposal shall be rejected; besides that it is a prodigious step in advance to

have the right of conferring with ministers, from whom that may be divined which is not asked. For my own part, I can only inform you intrigues and machinations are carried on, and the very moment I discover more, I shall consider it as my duty to send you intelligence. But I do not suppose I can give you any new information of this kind. I have only promised to supply you with the current news of the Court and the country. The rest is out of my sphere. I want the necessary means effectually to arrive at the truth. God grant it never should enter the head of the Emperor to allure the King of Prussia more adroitly, and to say to him, "Suffer me to take Bavaria, and I will suffer you to seize on Saxony; by which you will acquire the finest country in Germany, a formidable frontier, and near two millions of subjects; and by which, in a word, you will extend, round, and consolidate your dominions. Neither shall we have any great difficulties to combat. All of them may be obviated by making the Elector King of Poland. The Saxon family possess the mania of royalty; and, even should the kingdom become hereditary,

wherein would be the inconvenience? It is good, or at least it very soon will be good, to possess a strong barrier against Russia."

Should they ever conceive such a project, it would be executed, with or without the consent of all Europe. But this they have not conceived. One is too inconsistent, the other too incapable; and after some disputes, more or less serious, the Emperor will filch a village perhaps from Bavaria, and the King of Prussia continue to crouch under his nullity.

The misfortune is, that to treat him thus is to treat him with indulgence. The following is a fact entirely secret, but certain; and which, better than all those my preceding despatches contain, will teach you to judge the man. Within this fortnight he has paid a debt of a million of crowns to the Emperor. And what was this debt?—The Empress Queen had lent the Prince Royal, now King of Prussia, a million of florins; which, by accumulating interest, had become a million of crowns.—And when?—In the year 1778, during the Bavarian campaign, the fatigues of which they imagined themselves certain Frederick II. would

sink under. Thus was Frederick William base enough to accept the money of Austria, which he has had the imbecility to repay.<sup>1</sup> He had not the sense to say, "*My successor will repay you.*" No; he sanctions the act of the Imperial Court when lending money to the Princes Royal of Prussia. He imagines he has fulfilled his duties as a sovereign when he has had the honesty to pay his debts as an individual.

The sum-total of these debts amount to nine millions of crowns; and, though I do not indeed suppose that the agents are any losers, it is nevertheless true that the first months of his reign will cost Prussia thirty-six millions, exclusive of common expenses, gifts, gratifications, pensions, &c. The extraordinaries of the first campaign, in which it was necessary to remount all the cavalry, did not cost Frederick II. more than five millions, or

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<sup>1</sup> If it be a crime for a prince to pay his debts, even though indebted to an enemy, it is a crime which no man but a politician can discover. It is not unpleasant to remark that Frederick II., when Prince Royal, eagerly negotiated a loan in Russia, to promote which, his letters to Count Suhm inform us, he sent the Grand Duke—a dried salmon. Voltaire expected the largest diamond in the crown; he received a keg of wine.



five millions and a half, of crowns (less than a million sterling).

I have not yet depicted the Monarch as a warrior; the trade gives him the spleen, its minutiae fatigue him, and he is weary of the company of generals. He goes to Potsdam, comes on the parade, gives the word, dines and departs. He went on Wednesday to the house of exercise at Berlin, uttered a phrase or two, bade the troops march and vanished. And this is the house in which Frederick II., loaded with fame and years, regularly passed two hours daily, in the depth of winter, in disciplining, grumbling, cursing, praising, in a word, in keeping the tormented troops in perpetual action, who still were transported to see the Old One, for that was the epithet they gave him, at their head.

But a more important point is the new military regulations, which have been conceived, planned, approved, and, as it is said, are going to be printed, without either having been communicated to Prince Henry or the Duke of Brunswick. The tendency of this new plan is nothing less than the destruction of the army. The seven

best regiments are converted into light troops, and among others that of Wunsch. I am yet unacquainted with the particulars of the changes made, but, according to the opinion of General Moellendorf, had Lascy himself been their promoter they would have been just as they are. The worthy Moellendorf is humbled, discouraged, afflicted. All is under the direction of Goltz, who is haughty, incapable of discussion, and who holds it as a principle that the army is too expensive, and too numerous, in times of peace. He is perpetually embroiled with Bishopswerder, often obliged to attend to business of this kind, and in some manner under the necessity of interfering in affairs in the conduct of which he is not supposed to be equally well versed.

The Duke of Brunswick does not come. He replied to some person who had complimented him on his promotion, and who, in a letter, had supposed he was soon expected to arrive at Berlin, that he had been exceedingly flattered by receiving a title, which, however, he did not think he had merited ; that he never had, and never should, come to Berlin, unless sent for ; and of this he

saw no immediate prospect. I have very good information that he is exceedingly disgusted, and will doubtless be so more than ever, should the constitution of the army be reversed without his opinion being asked, who is the only field-marshal of Prussia.

I do not scruple to affirm that, by the aid of a thousand guineas, in case of need, the whole secrets of the Cabinet of Berlin might be perfectly known. The papers which continually are spread upon the tables of the King might be read and copied by two clerks, four valets de chambre, six or eight footmen, and two pages, the women not included. For this reason the Emperor has an exact and daily journal of the proceedings of the King, and would be acquainted with all his projects, were he really to project anything.

Never did kingdom announce a more speedy decline. It is sapped on every side at once. The means of receipt are diminished, the expenses are multiplied, principles are despised, the public opinion sported with, the army enfeebled, the very few people who are capable of being employed are discouraged. Those even are disgusted, to

please whom all others have been offended. Every foreigner of merit is kept at a distance, and the King is surrounded by the vulgar and the vile, that he may be thought to reign alone. This fatal frenzy is the most fruitful cause of all the evil which at present exists, and of that which is preparing for the future.

Were I to remain here ten years longer, I might furnish you with new particulars, but could not draw any new consequence. The man is judged ; his creatures are judged ; the system is judged. No change, no possible improvement, can take place, so long as there shall be no first minister. When I say no change, I do not, by any means, wish you to understand no person shall be dismissed. Sand shall succeed to sand, but sand it still shall be, and nothing better, till piles shall be sunken on which a foundation may be laid. What, therefore, should I do here henceforth? I can be of no use ; yet nothing but utility—great, direct, immediate utility—could reconcile me to the extreme indecency of the present amphibious existence which has been conferred upon me, should this existence be prolonged.

I am obliged to repeat that my abilities, what I merit and what I am worth, ought at present to be known to the King, and to the ministry. If I am capable of nothing, and merit nothing, I am, while here, a bad bargain. If I am of some worth, and may effect some good purpose — if nine months (for nine months will have passed away before I shall return) — if, I say, a subaltern test of nine months, most painful in itself, and during which I have encountered a thousand and a thousand impediments without once being aided, have enabled me to acquire some knowledge of men, some information, some sagacity, without enumerating the precious contents of my portfolio, I am, then, in duty bound to myself to ask, and either to obtain a place or to return to a private station, which will neither be so fatiguing to body nor mind, nor so barren of fame.

For these reasons I undisguisedly declare, or rather repeat, I cannot remain here, and I request my return may be formally authorised ; whether it be intended to employ me hereafter or to restore me to myself. I certainly shall not revolt

at any kind of useful occupation. My feelings are not superannuated, and though my enthusiasm may be benumbed, it is not extinct. I have in my sensations at this moment a strong proof to the contrary. The day which you inform me you have fixed for the convocation of the notables I shall regard as one of the most glorious days of my life. This convocation, no doubt, will soon be followed by a national assembly, and here I contemplate renovating order, which shall give new life to the monarchy. I should think myself loaded with honours were I but the meanest secretary of that assembly, the project of which I had the happiness to communicate, and to which there is so much need that you should appertain, or rather that you should become its soul. But to remain here, condemned to the rack, in company with fools, obliged to sound and to wade through the foetid meanderings of an administration, each day of which is signalised by some new trait of cowardice and stupidity, this is beyond my strength; for I perceive no good purpose it can effect. Send me, therefore, my recall, and let me know whether I am to pass through Holland.

There, for example, I would accept a secret commission; because pacification there demands, as an indispensable preliminary, a secret agent, who can see and speak the truth, and who is capable of captivating confidence. I do not believe foreign politics afford any opportunity of rendering greater service to France. I fear, since it is necessary I should confess my fears, we rely too much on the ascendancy which the aristocracy has gained, of late years, over the Stadtholdership. I think I perceive the system of the patriots has not acquired any decided superiority, except in the province of Holland, which does but disturb its co-estates, or at least inasmuch as it excites their animosities. Nay, at Amsterdam itself, the very hotbed of anti-Stadtholder sentiments, was not the grand council, though the first to rise against the concession of the Scotch brigade to England, the first to plead in favour of military convoys, and to demand the dismissal of the Duke Louis of Brunswick? Was it not also the first to vote for a separate peace with England, and for the acceptance of the mediation of Russia? Was not its admiralty, several of the members

of which depend on the regency, highly involved in the plot which occasioned the failure of the Brest expedition? How can it be otherwise? The sovereign council is only in possession of an imaginary authority. It is the burgomasters, who are annually changed; or even the president of the burgomasters, who is changed once in three months; or rather, in fine, such among the burgomasters as gain some influence of understanding or character over the others, who issue those orders that direct the important vote of the city of Amsterdam, in the Assembly of the States. When we recollect that the college of sheriffs, old and new, from which the burgomasters are elected, contains a great number of English partisans, and depends in some manner on the Stadtholder, who chooses those sheriffs, I know not how we can depend upon the future system of that city.

It is for such reasons that I cannot understand why it should not be for our interest to bring these disputes to a conclusion, if we do not wish to annul the Stadtholdership, which cannot be annulled without giving birth to foreign and



domestic convulsions. And is it possible we should wish for war? We ought not, doubtless, to suffer the family of the Stadtholder to remain possessed of legislative power, in the three provinces of Guelderland, Utrecht, and Over-Yssel, by what is called the rules of the regency; for this, added to the same prerogative in the provinces of Zealand and Groningen, inclines the balance excessively in his favour. Neither can it be doubted but that the power of the Stadtholder ought to be subservient to the legislative power of the states. It is of equal importance to our system, or rather to the regular system of foreign politics, that the legislative power of the states should be directed and maintained by the uniform influence of the people. But the pretensions and passions of individuals, and the private interests of the members of an aristocracy, have, in all countries, too often been supposed the public interest; which is peculiarly true here, where the union of the Seven Provinces was formed in troublesome times, and by the effect of chance, since the people did not think of erecting a republican government till the sovereignty had

first been refused by France and England. Hence it resulted that the regents and the people never were agreed concerning the limitation of their rights and reciprocal duties. The regents have necessarily laboured to render themselves independent of the people; and the people, supposing themselves absolute, since they never consigned over the sovereignty to the regents, nor have had any interest to support them, have on all critical occasions counteracted their attempts. This was the origin of the Stadtholder party, and of that fluctuation which has happened between the despotic will of an individual, the perfidious tergiversations of the wavering, the feeble aristocratical colleges, and the impetuosity of an enraged populace. Should ever a link of union exist between the citizens and the regents, the despotism of the Stadtholder and the caprices of the oligarchy will have an end; but, while no such union does exist, while the mode in which the people influence the government remains undetermined, so long must the system of France remain insecure.

Preserve the confederate constitution, between

the provinces and the republican form, in its reciprocal state. Or, to reduce the proposition to the most simple terms, INSTEAD OF THE ODIOS AND ILLEGAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STADTHOLDER, OR OF A BURGOMASTER, SUBSTITUTE THE REGULAR AND SALUTARY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CITIZENS.<sup>1</sup> Such should be the palladium of the republic; such the pursuit of our politics.

This restriction rather demands a concurrence of circumstances than the shock of contention. And shall we be able to effect it by those acts of violence which are attributed to us, even though they should not be ours, or by increasing fermentation on one part, and on the other suspicion? Have we not made our influence and our power sufficiently felt? Is it not time to show that we wish only for the abolition of the Stadtholder regulations, and not that of the Stadtholdership? And how shall we conclude without making the conclusion tragical, since it is not in human wisdom to calculate all possible consequences, if we cannot effectually persuade the persons at Nimeguen<sup>2</sup> that such is our real and sole system.

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<sup>1</sup> "Recommendations" implies elections or appointments.

<sup>2</sup> The Princess of Orange and her party.

Such is the rough draft of my profession of faith, relative to the affairs of Holland. From what I have said, and according to these principles, which I shall more circumstantially develop, if required, in a written memorial, it may be estimated whether I can or cannot be useful in the country; further supposing me possessed of local information, which I shall with facility acquire.

## LETTER LXV

*January 16th, 1787.*

IN the opinion of those who know that revolutions effected by arms are not often those that overturn states, it is truly a revolution in the Prussian monarchy to behold an example for the first time of a titled mistress, who is on the point of sequestrating the King, of forming a distinct Court, of exciting cabals which shall be communicated from the palace to the *legions*, and of arranging affairs, favourites, administration, and grants, after a manner absolutely unknown to these cold and phlegmatic countries. The moment of the disgrace, and the consequent elevation, of Mademoiselle Voss approaches. Hence intrigues, sarcasms, opinions, and conjectures, or rather predictions. Amid this mass of suppositions, true or false, the following is what I can collect, which seems to have most probability. My translation is according to the text of one of

former friends of Mademoiselle Voss, to whom she has opened her heart.

This new Joan of Arc, on whose head heaven would invoke the nuptial benediction, has been persuaded that it is her duty to renounce marriage, and sacrifice herself, first to her country; the second place, to her lover's glory; and, thirdly, to her family's advantage. The country, her advisers, will gain a protectress, who will drive off the covetous and perverse counsellors; the honour of the Monarch will not be tarnished by a humble marriage; and her family will not be exposed to the danger of beholding her a momentary princess, and presently afterwards exiled to an obscure castle, with some trifling pension. They affirm that the more rapturous should rapture be secured by the rites of Hymen, and that from that instant this favour commences she will rain honours on her relations, with dignities and gratuities of every kind. Religious motives have been added to motives of convenience. It has been demonstrated that there was less evil in condescension in contracting a pretended marriage while the former one remained in full force. At length

it was concluded that this *victim to her country's good* should be taken to Potsdam and offered up at Sans-Souci. A house has been prepared, sumptuously furnished, say some, and simply, according to others, and at which are all the paraphernalia of a favourite.

An anecdote, truly inconceivable, which requires confirmation, and which I am still averse to believe, is circulated: that the King prostitutes his daughter, the Princess Frederica, to be the companion of his mistress.

Mademoiselle Voss has a kind of natural wit, some information, is rather wilful than firm, and is very obviously awkward, which she endeavours to disguise by assuming an air of simplicity. She is ugly, and that even to a degree; and her only excellence is the goodness of her complexion, which I think rather wan than white, and a fine neck, over which she threw a double handkerchief the other day, as she was leaving Prince Henry's comedy to cross the apartments, saying to the Princess Frederica, "I must take good care of them, for it is after these they run." Judge what must be the manners of princesses

who can laugh at such an expression. It is this mixture of eccentric licentiousness (which she accompanies with airs of ignorant innocence) and vestal severity, which, the world says, has seduced the King. Mademoiselle Voss, who holds it ridiculous to be German, and who is tolerably well acquainted with the English language, affects the Anglomaniac to excess, and thinks it a proof of politeness not to love the French. Her vanity, which has found itself under restraint when in company with some amiable people of that nation, hates those it cannot imitate, more especially because her sarcasms sometimes are returned with interest. Thus, for instance, the other day, I could not keep silence when I heard an exclamation, "Oh, Heavens! when shall I see, when shall we have an English play! I really should expire with rapture!"—"For my part, Mademoiselle," said I, drily, "I rather wish you may not, sooner than you imagine, stand in need of French play."<sup>1</sup> All those who began to be

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<sup>1</sup> The wit, which is obscure and almost unintelligible in the original, is wholly so in a translation. Puns seldom can be translated. The French is, *O mon Dieu! quand verrai-je donc, quand y aura-t-il ici un spectacle anglais? Ah!*



offended by her high airs smiled, and Prince Henry, who pretended not to hear her, laughed aloud. Her face was suffused with blushes, and she did not answer a word ; but it is easy to punish, difficult to correct.

She has hitherto declared open war against the mystics, and detests the daughters of the chief favourite, who are maids-of-honour to the Queen. But, as amidst her weaknesses she is transported by devotion even to superstition, nothing may be depended on for futurity. Should ambition succeed primary sensations, it is to be presumed her family will govern the state. At the head of this family stands Count Finckenstein, whose tranquillity would not be disturbed by the fall of the empire, but who would with inexpressible joy contemplate his children enacting great parts. Next in rank is Count Schulemburg, who has newly been brought into the ministry ; an active

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*J'en mourrais de joie !—Je désire, Mademoiselle, lui dis-je assez sèchement, que vous n'ayez besoin, plutôt que vous ne croyez, d'un spectacle français.* By the word *spectacle* I imagine the author meant those *showy* airs of which he supposed the lady would soon stand in need to captivate the King when the charm of novelty should have disappeared.

man, formerly even too busy, but who seems to perceive that those who keep most in the background become the principal figures. This family preserves an inveterate hatred against Welner, who formerly carried off or seduced one of their relations, who is at present his wife. To these we may add the president Voss, the brother of the beauty; who at least possesses that spirit of calculation, and that German avidity, by which such persons profit whenever fortune falls in their way. Should Mademoiselle Voss render her situation in any degree subservient to such purposes, she must, while at Potsdam, prepare the dismissal of Bishopswerder and Welner, or render them useless; for it is more the mode in Germany to dispense with service than to dismiss. She herself may possibly be ill-guided, and may confide in the first who shall happen to be present, for she is indiscreet. She depends on the constancy of her lover; for she is yet inexperienced in the *gratitude* of mankind. Having never yet obliged anybody, she never yet has rendered anyone ungrateful.

Should this happen, affairs will remain in their

present state, or grow worse. The King will shut himself up at Potsdam; whence, however, he will frequently make excursions to Berlin, because he has contracted a habit of restlessness, and because his favourite seraglio will always be at a brothel. He will then be totally idle, will tolerate rapaciousness, and, as much as he is able, hasten the kingdom's ruin, towards which it tends as rapidly as present circumstances and the *vis inertia* of the German character will allow; which does not permit madmen to commit anything more than follies, and preserves men from the destructive delirium of the passions.

Add to this, the Emperor dares attempt nothing, is consistent in nothing, concludes nothing, that he approaches his end, and that all his brothers are pacific. I should not be astonished were the hog of Epicurus, who, at least, is not addicted to pomp, and consequently will not of himself ruin the treasury, to acquire, thanks to circumstances and interested men, a kind of glory during his reign.

Military regulations are again mentioned. The regiments of the line are not to be ruined, but it

seems there is an intention to form a certain number of battalions of chasseurs, who, under good regulations, may become useful; and this, indeed, was the design of Frederick II. Nothing yet can be affirmed on the subject, except that it is exceedingly strange that Frederick William should imagine himself able to effect any reform, the economical part excepted, in the military system and in the army of Frederick II.

Prince Henry probably will have some influence in the army. His name stands the first on the list, although a field-marshal has been appointed. The King sent him the list yesterday to assure him it was so, by M. von Goltz himself. They have given the child a bauble. What his military influence is to be must remain a secret till the appearance of the new regulations. He is often visited by the general aides-de-camp. Whether this is or is not known to the King is doubtful, and, if known, it is evident deceit only is meant, which, indeed, is a very fruitless trouble. He has no plan contrary to the politics of the kingdom. I do not say of the Cabinet, for Cabinet there is none. Indeed, he has no plan whatever.

Count Goertz is recalled, of which Count Hertzberg was, this morning, ignorant. There cannot be a better proof that there is no desire to interfere in the affairs of Holland, or not openly; nor simply to expose the nation to a war, to promote the interests of the Stadtholder. Of this, unfortunately, the House of Orange is not persuaded, but of the contrary, if I may judge from the letter of the Princess, which came by the courier of this morning, a part of which I read as soon as it was deciphered. It is in this point of view that my journey to Nimeguen, under a borrowed name, and with secret authority, known only to her and me, may become useful. In this same letter I have read that the patriots are endeavouring to effect a loan of sixteen millions of florins, or upwards of one million three hundred thousand pounds sterling, at three per cent.; although the province of Holland has never given more than two and a-half per cent., and that they find difficulty in procuring the money.

There are three bishops here: the Bishop of Warmia, the Bishop of Culm (who is of the House of Hohenzollern), and the Bishop of Paphos. The

first, whom I mentioned to you in my account of the King's journey into Prussia, is the same whom Frederick II. robbed of near eighty thousand crowns per annum, by reducing the revenues of his bishopric to twenty-four thousand from a hundred thousand crowns; for such was its value previous to the partition of Poland. The Monarch one day said to him, "I have not, in my own right, any great claims on Paradise; let me entreat you to take me in under your cloak."—"That I would willingly," replied the prelate, "if your Majesty had not cut it so short."<sup>1</sup>—He is a man of pleasure and of the world, and who is only acquainted with the fine arts, without other views or projects, religious or political.

The second has been in the service of France. He has the rage of preaching upon him, and of being eloquent; and the desire of doing good; but as he has also the rage of running in debt, and getting children, his sermons make no proselytes, and his charities relieve no distress. The latter is a suffragan of Breslau, formerly a great

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<sup>1</sup> This is better told in the "Anecdoten aus dem Leben Friedrichs des Zweiten," where the Bishop says he had cut his coat too short for it to hide *smuggled goods*.

libertine, and a little of an atheist ; at present impotent and superannuated.

These three prelates, who are to be reinforced by the Bishop of Lujavia, and the new coadjutor, the Prince of Hohenloe, Canon of Strasburg, will hold no council; nor will they justify the fears the orthodox Lutherans, and all Saxony, who suppose the corner-stone of the Protestant religion to be laid here, have entertained concerning the inclination of the King to Popery. The one came to obtain the order of the Black Eagle, and is gratified ; the other for a benefice, vacant by the death of the Abbé Bathiani ; the Prince Bishop of Warmia for a money loan, at two per cent., which may be sufficient to satisfy his creditors.

Prince Henry, after having given a comedy and a grand supper, concluded the banquet with a ball, which began gloomily enough, and so continued. While some were dancing in one room, others were gambling at the Lotto in another. The King neither danced nor gambled ; his evening was divided between Mademoiselle Voss and the Princess of Brunswick. He spoke a word to M. von Grotthaus, but not a syllable to anybody

Most of the actors and spectators departed before him. The Bishop of Warmia and the Marquis of Lucchesini were not so much as reproached. I would have defied the most penetrating observer to have suspected there was a king in company. Languor and restraint were present, neither eagerness nor flattery. He retired half-past twelve, after Mademoiselle Voss had departed. It is too visible that she is the soul of the troupe, and that the soul which is thus wrapt in a covering so coarse is very diminutive. We must expect this continual repetition; the moment the scene may change, the scene itself changes.

Postscript.—The news of the recall of Goertz has been received; and, from the manner in which it was conveyed to me, either Count d'Esterno wished to ensnare me, or has had a snare laid for himself. I am acquainted with circumstances which make me believe it possible the negotiation may again be resumed. I have not time to say more.

The Duke of Brunswick is sent for, and will arrive in a few days.



Count Wartensleben, who had for five months been forgotten, yesterday morning was present with between five and six hundred crowns per annum, and the command of the regiment Roemer at Brandenburg.

*FRÉDÉRIQUE-SOPHIE WILHELMINE,  
PRINCESS OF PRUSSIA,  
WIFE OF WILLIAM V, PRINCE OF ORANGE*

*After a painting by F. A. Tischbein, in the  
Rix Museum, Amsterdam*







## LETTER LXVI

*January 19th, 1787. The day of my departure.  
This will not be sent off sooner than to-morrow,  
but it ought to arrive before me.*

COUNT SCHMETTAU, the complaisant gentleman of the Princess Ferdinand, the indisputable father of two of her children, had eight years quitted the army, which he left in the midst of war, angered by a disdainful expression from Frederick II., and holding the rank of captain. He has lately been appointed a colonel, with the pay of fifteen hundred crowns per annum. The nomination has displeased the army, and particularly the General Aide-de-camp Goltz, who has been in harness five-and-twenty years, and still only enjoys the rank of lieutenant-colonel. Count Schmettau has served with honour, has received many wounds, nor does he want intelligence, particularly in the art of fortification. He has drawn a great number of plans which are much esteemed. A military manual is also mentioned

with praise, in which he teaches all that is necessary to be done, from the raw recruit to the field-marshal. In fine, this infringement on rank might have been supportable, but there has been another which has excited the height of discontent.

The commission of one Major Schenkendorff, the governor of the second son of the King, who gives up his pupil, has been antedated, by which he leaps over six-and-thirty heads. This dangerous expedient, which Frederick II. never employed but on solemn occasions, and in favour of distinguished persons, and which his successor had before practised in behalf of Count Wartensleben, does but tend to spread incertitude over the reality of military rank, and to be destructive of all emulation. It is, besides, infinitely dangerous when employed by a feeble Prince, absurd when resorted to at the commencement of his reign, and must finally deprive the Monarch himself of one of his greatest resources, the point of honour.

He has deposited five hundred thousand crowns in the provincial treasury, and has sent the transfer to Mademoiselle Voss. Thus, happen

what may, she will always have an income of a thousand a year, besides diamonds, plate, jewels, furniture, and a house that has been purchased for her at Berlin; which is a pleasure house, for she does not intend to inhabit it. Her royal lover has himself imagined all these delicate attentions, and the consequence is that the most disinterested of mistresses has managed her affairs better than the most artful of coquettes could have done. Time will show us whether her mind will aspire to the rank of favourite Sultana.

New taxes are intended to be laid on cards, wines, foreign silks, oysters, coffee, sugar.—Contemptible resources!—As the ministry are proceeding blindfold on all these matters, they are kept in a kind of secrecy. It seems they will rather make attempts than carry them into execution.

To-day, the birthday of Prince Henry, the King has made him a present of a rich box, estimated to be worth twelve thousand crowns, has set out the gold plate, and has done everything which Frederick II. used to do, if we omit the rehearsal of a grand concert, the day before,



in his chamber; for he has time for everything except for business.

“Let there be bawdy-houses on the wings, and I will easily beat him in the centre.”—Beware that this saying of the Emperor does not become a prophecy. The prophet himself, fortunately, is not formidable; though I should not be astonished were he to be animated by so much torpor and baseness; but, if he do not wait two years longer, the energy which the King wants may be found in the army.

Postscript.—The Duke of Weimar is at Mayence, as it is said, for the nomination of a coadjutor; but, as he visits all the Courts of the Upper and Lower Rhine, it would be good to keep a watchful eye over him, in my opinion.

LETTER  
OR  
MEMORIAL

PRESENTED TO

FREDERICK WILLIAM II.  
KING OF PRUSSIA

ON THE DAY OF HIS ACCESSION TO THE THRONE

BY  
COUNT MIRABEAU

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Arcus et statuas demolitur et obscurat oblivio, negligit carpitque posteritas. Contrà contemptor ambitionis et infinitæ potestatis domitor animus ipsâ vetustate florescit; nec ab ullis magis laudatur quàm quibus minimè necesse est.

PLIN., Panegy.



## ADVERTISEMENT

SOME imputations are at once so odious and absurd, that a person of sense is not tempted to make them any reply. If he be a worthy man, silence is his only answer when his calumniators are anonymous.

But, among the abuse lately vented against me, and which I have enumerated rather among the rewards of my labours than estimated as a part of my misfortunes, there is one species of scandal to which I have not been insensible.

I have been accused of presenting the reigning King of Prussia with a libel against the immortal Frederick II.

Frederick II. himself sent for me, when I hesitated (much as I regretted, having lived his contemporary, to die unknown to him) lest I should disturb his last moments, during which it was so natural to desire to contemplate a great

man. He deigned to welcome and distinguish me. No foreigner after me was admitted to his conversation. The last time he thus honoured me he had refused the just and eager request which some of my countrymen, who had repaired to Berlin to see his military manœuvres, testified to be admitted to his presence.—And could I, in return for so honourable a distinction, have written a libel?

Frederick is of himself too great for me ever to be tempted to write his panegyric. The very word is, in my apprehension, highly beneath a great king: it supposes exaggeration and insincerity; the wresting or dissimulation of truth; a view of the subject only on the favourable side. Panegyric, in fine, is to disguise, or to betray, the truth; for this is one of its inevitable inconveniences; never was panegyric true or honourable that was devoid of reproof. I therefore have not, nor shall I ever have, written the eulogy of Frederick II., but I have for these two years past been endeavouring to raise a monument to his memory, that ought not to be wholly unworthy of the labours by which his reign has been illus-

trated, or of those grand lessons which his successes and his errors have equally taught. I have engaged in this considerable work, which will see the light in the course of the present year, and of which I make no secret.<sup>1</sup>

The Memorial which I presented to Frederick William II. on the day of his accession to the throne, was entirely foreign to this plan. It was intended only to lay before him the hopes of worthy men, who knew how many events, rather great than splendid, might take birth in Prussia under a new reign and a prince in the prime of manhood.

The following is the Memorial in question, which has been attributed to me as a crime. I lay my case before the world, that the world may judge. I have not altered a line, though my opinion has varied considerably in some circumstances, as will be seen in my work on Prussia. But I should have reproached myself had I made any change, however trifling, in a memorial to which the venom of malignity has been imputed.

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<sup>1</sup> This Memorial was published in 1787, and the work alluded to is—*L'Histoire de la Monarchie Prussienne*.

It has been often asked what right I had to present such a memorial.

Besides the thanks which the present King of Prussia graciously was pleased to send me in a letter, he has not disdained personally to address me, in a numerous assembly, at the palace of his royal uncle, Prince Henry, a week before my departure from Berlin. This I have thought proper to make public, not in answer to idle tales, which never could deceive any person, but because that the courage to love truth is even more honourable to a king than that of speaking truth is to a private person.

L E T T E R  
OR  
M E M O R I A L  
PRESENTED TO  
FREDERICK WILLIAM II

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SIRE, you now are King.—The day is come when it has pleased the Creator to confide to you the destiny of some millions of men, and the power of bringing much evil, or much good, upon the earth. The sceptre descends to you at a period of life when man is capable of sustaining its weight. You ought at present to be weary of vulgar enjoyments, to be dead to pleasures, one only excepted. But this one is the only great, the sole inexhaustible pleasure: a pleasure hitherto interdicted, but now in your power. You are called to watch over the welfare of mankind.

The epocha at which you ascend the throne is fortunate; knowledge daily expands; it has



laboured, it continues to labour for you, and to collect wisdom ; it extends its influence over your nation, which so many circumstances have contributed in part to deprive of its light. Reason has erected its rigorous empire. Men at present behold one of themselves only, though enveloped in royal robes, and from whom more than ever they require virtue. Their suffrages are not to be despised, and in their eyes but one species of glory is now attainable ; all others are exhausted. Military success, political talents, the miraculous labours of art, the progress of the sciences, have each alternately appeared resplendent from one extremity of Europe to the other. But enlightened benevolence, which organizes, which vivifies empires, never yet has displayed itself pure and unmixed upon the throne. It is for you to seat it there. Yes, renown so sublime is reserved to you. Your predecessor has gained a sufficient number of battles, perhaps too many ; has too much wearied fame and her hundred tongues ; has dried up the fountain of military fame for several reigns, for several ages. Should accident oblige you to become his imitator, it is necessary

you should appear worthy so to be, in which your Majesty will not fail. But this is no reason why you should painfully seek honour in the beaten path, wherein you can but rank as second; while, with greater ease, you may create a superior glory, and which shall be only yours. Frederick has enforced the admiration of men, but Frederick never obtained their love: Yes, SIRE, their love may be wholly yours.

SIRE, your mien, your stature, recall to mind the heroes of antiquity. These to the soldier are much; much to the people, whose simple good sense associates the noblest qualities of mind to beauty of person; and such was the first intention of Nature. In your person the heroic form is embellished by most remarkable tints of mildness and calm benevolence, which promise not a little, even to philosophers. You have a feeling heart, and the long necessity of behaving with circumspection must have tempered that native bounty which otherwise might have made you too compliant. Your understanding is just; by this I have often been struck. Your elocution is nervous and precise. You have several times demonstrated

that you possess an empire over yourself. You have not been educated, but you have not been spoiled; and men possessed of energy can educate themselves. They are daily educated by experience, and thus are taught what they never forget. Your means are great. You are the only monarch in Europe who, far from being in debt, is possessed of treasures. Your army is excellent, your nation docile, loyal, and possessed of much more public spirit than might be expected in so slavish a constitution. Some parts of the administration of Prussia, such as its responsibility and consistency, which are purely military, merit great praises. One of your uncles, crowned with glory and success, possesses the confidence of Europe, the genius of a hero, and the soul of a sage. He is a counsellor, a coadjutor, a friend, whom Nature and destiny have sent you, at the moment when you have most need of him, at the time when the more voluntary your deference for him shall be, the more infallibly will it acquire you applause. You have rivals in power, but not a neighbour who is in reality to be feared. He who seemed to proclaim himself the most

formidable has too long threatened to strike.<sup>1</sup> He has been taught to know you. He has hastily undertaken, and as hastily renounced. He will again renounce his new projects. He will require all, will obtain nothing, and will never be anything more than an irresolute adventurer, a burden to himself and others. To preserve yourself from his attempts, you need but to suffer his contradictory projects to counteract each other.

You, SIRE, are the only prince who is under the indispensable necessity of performing great things, and from whom great things are expected; and this necessity, this expectation, ought to be enumerated among your best resources. How admirable is your situation! How inestimable are the advantages you bring to that throne whereon being seated your power is boundless!—a power formidable even to the possessor<sup>1</sup> But be it remembered that grand institutions, important changes, and the regeneration of empires, appertain only to absolute monarchs. Deign, oh deign, to accept the good that Providence has strewed beneath your feet! Merit the benefactions of the

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1 The Emperor Joseph II.

poor, the love of the people, the respect of Europe, and the approbation of the wise! Be just, be good; and you will be happy and great.

GREAT.—This, SIRE, is the title you wish; but you wish it from history, from futurity; you would disdain it from the lips of courtiers, whom you *have* heard, and whom you *shall* hereafter much oftener hear, prodigal of the grossest praise. Should you do that which the son of your slave could have hourly done better than yourself, they will affirm that YOU HAVE PERFORMED AN EXTRAORDINARY ACT. Should you obey your passions, they will affirm—YOU HAVE WELL DONE. Should you pour forth the blood of your subjects as a river does its waters, they will pronounce—YOU HAVE DONE WELL. Should you tax the free air, they will assert—YOU HAVE DONE WELL. Should you, puissant as you are, become revengeful, still would they proclaim you had DONE WELL. So they told the intoxicated Alexander when he plunged his dagger into the bosom of his friend. Thus they addressed Nero, having assassinated his mother.

But, SIRE, you need only to feel those sentiments of justice which are native to your bosom,

and that enlightened consciousness of benevolence which you possess; your own heart will be your judge; and its decrees will be confirmed by your people, by the world, and by posterity. The esteem of these is indispensable; and how easily may their esteem be obtained! Should you indefatigably perform the duties of the day, and not remit its burdensome labours till the morrow; should you by grand and prolific principles know how to simplify these duties, so that they may be performed by a single man; should you accord your subjects all the liberty they are capable of enjoying; should you protect property, aid industry, and root out petty oppressors, who, abusing your name, will not permit men to do that for their own advantage which they might without injury to others; then will the unanimous voice of mankind bestow blessings on your authority, and thus render it more sacred and more potent. All things will then become easy to you, for every will and every power will unite with your will and your power. and your labours will daily acquire new enjoyments. Nature has rendered labour necessary to man; but she has also bestowed on him this precious ad-

vantage, that the change of labour is at once a recreation to him and a source of pleasure. And who more than a monarch may live according to this order of Nature? A philosopher has said, "No man was so oppressed by languor as a king."—He ought to have said A SLOTHFUL KING. How can languor overcome a sovereign who shall perform his duties? How may he better maintain his body in health, or his mind in vigour, than when by labour he preserves himself from that disgust which all men of understanding must feel, amidst the babblers and the parasites who study but to corrupt, lull, benumb, and pilfer princes?—Their whole art is to inspire him with apathy and debility; or to render him impotent, rash, and indolent. Your people will enjoy your virtues; for by these only can they prosper or improve. Your courtiers will applaud your defects; for on these depend their influence and their hopes.

Habit, SIRE, no less than accident, influences men; and habit is determined by the beginning. Therefore is the commencement of a reign of such value. Everything is hoped, and the slightest effort seconds and confirms that hope, increasing

it a hundredfold. By the pleasure of having done, we are strengthened in the love of doing, good; and that which is wished is rendered more easy by that which has been effected.

The beginning, SIRE, depends absolutely on yourself. Acquire none but good habits; give no encouragement to those that are frivolous. Display the man of order, the lover of the public welfare. You will soon be joined by all your ministers and all your courtiers. Emulation will spring forth, and wisdom will inevitably be the result. Emulation will aid you to judge the understandings of those by whom you shall be approached. It may sometimes excite or produce a happy project, and you will even turn that propensity to flattery which cannot totally be expelled from Courts, to the good of your people.

You may immediately ascertain to yourself that liberty of mind which grand affairs require, by interfering only with such as appertain to the sovereign authority, and by leaving to your magistrates and ministers all those which naturally should come under their consideration.

More than one estimable monarch has ren-



dered himself incapable of reigning with glory by overburdening his mind with private affairs. As, SIRE, it will become you always to govern well, it will also be worthy of you not to govern too much. Wherefore should a king concern himself with civil government which can be better exercised without his aid? Authority once established, external safety ascertained, civil and criminal justice administered alike to all classes of citizens, landed property accurately estimated so as to be judiciously assessed, and public works, roads, and canals wisely attended to; what more has government to transact? It has but to enjoy the industry of the people, who, while active for their own interest, are also acting for the interest of the State and the Sovereign.

The king who shall examine whether it be not the most wise not to lay any restraint on the general affairs and business of men is yet to be born; yet this is the king who would govern like a God; and, by the ministry of reason, leaving the interest of each individual to himself, would ascertain to all the fruits of their industry and their knowledge. Where men are most free, there

will they be most numerous; and there, also, will they pay the most submission, and have the greatest attachment, to authority; for authority is essentially the friend of that freedom which it protects. No man would require more than to be left AT LIBERTY AND IN PEACE.

You surely, SIRE, are not to be told that the mania of enacting and restraining laws is the characteristic of inferior minds; of men incapable of generalizing, who feed on timidity, and shake with ridiculous apprehensions. This important truth will indicate to you the reformation you ought to make; and how much better you will govern than your predecessors and rivals, by governing less.

There are, doubtless, a multitude of good, useful, necessary, and even urgent things, which it will be impossible you should immediately execute. You must first learn them, must combine, and leave them to ripen. And wherefore should you confide in the opinion of another? This is one of the grand errors of which you ought to be aware, as you ought also of being obliged to retract what you have done. The

inconsistency of that sovereign, among your rivals, who has attempted the most, has been more injurious to the political respect in which he might have been held than his worst errors. Not only, therefore, must you learn what is to do, but, which is more difficult, you must, perhaps, instruct your ministers, and certainly your people. Let persuasion precede legislation, SIRE; and you will meet no contradiction, and scarcely any impediments in those operations which require moments of greater calm, and less business, than are those of the beginning of a reign. But there are things which you may instantly execute, and which, by propagating a high opinion of your worth, will acquire the fruits of confidence to your own profit, and facilitate the grand changes with which your reign ought to abound.

Suffer a man who loves you, pardon the freedom for the truth of the expression; suffer a man who loves you, for the good you may do, and for the grand example you shall afford of the evil that may be avoided, to point out a few of those things which a single voluntary act of yours may perform, and which can only be productive

of good, without inconvenience, while they shall display the morning of the most paternal reign which has ever blessed mankind.

Among these, SIRE, and in the first rank, I shall enumerate the abolition of military slavery; that is to say, the obligation imposed in your states on all men from the age of eighteen to sixty, and upward if able, to serve for threepence a day.<sup>1</sup> This fearful law, originating in the necessities of an iron age and a half-barbarous country; this law, which depopulates and exhausts your kingdom, which dishonours the most numerous and the most useful class of your subjects, without whom you and your ancestors would only have been slaves more or less feathered and painted; this law, which is abused by your officers, who enrol more men than the military conscription permits, this law does not procure you a soldier more than you would acquire by an increase of pay, which might easily be made from the additional revenue which you would gain by the just suppression of those ruinous enlisters whom

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<sup>1</sup> *Huit gros tous les cinq jours.*—I suspect I have rated the groschen too high.

Frederick II maintained in foreign countries; and by a sage mode of recruiting the Prussian army, in a manner that should elevate the mind, increase public spirit, and preserve the forms of freedom instead of those of brutalizing slavery.

Throughout Europe, SIRE, and in Prussia particularly, men have had the stupidity to deprive themselves of one of the most useful instinctive feelings on which the love of our country can be founded. Men are required to go to war like sheep to the slaughter-house; though nothing could be more easy than to unite the service of the public with emulation and fame.

Your subjects are obliged to serve from eighteen to sixty; and this they, with good reason, suppose to be the rigorous subjection of servility. The militia of France is the same, and, though less cruel, is hateful to the people. Yet the Swiss have a similar obligation, which commences at the age of sixteen, and they believe themselves to be free men.

In fact, that natural confederacy which induces citizens of the same condition to repel the enemy, and to defend their own and their neighbour's

inheritance, is so manifest, and the exercise of it is so pleasingly attractive to youth, that it is inconceivable how tyranny could be so weak as to render it a burden.

Impart, SIRE, to this obligation the forms of freedom and of fame, by making it voluntary, and necessary in order to merit esteem, by rendering it a point of honour; and your army will be better conditioned, while your subjects shall imagine they are, and shall really be, relieved from a yoke most odious.

Begin by remitting ten years of service; your army then will not be debilitated by age.

Let your peasants afterwards form national companies, in all parishes, that shall exercise every Sunday.

Let such national companies choose their own grenadiers; and from these let the recruits for your regiments be selected; not by your officers, not by the magistrates, but by the plurality of votes among their comrades. Arbitrary proceedings would vanish, choice would become distinction, and the parishes responsible for the soldiers they have supplied. Being obliged

to fill up their own vacancies when drafts are made, the regiments would be always complete, without effort, without tyranny, and without murmur.

Kings who have created power, impatient of enjoyment, have not confided in general principles. They have feared that the people they have invited into their countries should too soon be disgusted by the difficulties they must have to encounter at the beginning. Hence those tyrannical regulations, by the aid of which they have intended to fix the wretch to the soil on which he had been planted. In the present state of your kingdom there is no pretext for the continuance of this error. It is time to eradicate slavery at which the heart revolts, which drives away good subjects, or inspires them with the desire of escaping. Banish, therefore, all unnecessary constraint; and this, which of all others is the most abhorrent and the most unnecessary.

Yet, before deciding on any plan for the recruiting of the army, it is requisite to consider, with all the attention which it merits, that of the most worthy of your ministers, Baron Hertzberg,

who, to a comprehensive knowledge of the wounds of Prussia, and the means of prosperity and cure, joins the highest degree of public spirit and patriotic love. He supposes it possible to recruit the army by itself, so as to provide for everything that the most restless state of politics can require. Perhaps, and probably, his plan and mine may coalesce. It is incontestably one of those which ought to be executed at the very beginning of your reign ; but let it be preceded by a law of enfranchisement, which shall procure your efforts the universal suffrages of mankind, and their combined aid.

It is not to a man so worthy as you, SIRE (and what greater praise can be bestowed upon a King ?)—it is not necessary to recommend, with respect to enrolments, the religious observation of all the stipulations so unworthily violated by your predecessors, or the pious rewarding of soldiers who have distinguished themselves by long and loyal service.—Alas ! SIRE, I have seen alms bestowed, under the windows of your palace, upon men who, while you were yet in your cradle, have shed their blood in defence of your family. Your



generous equity doubtless will soften the rigour of their destiny. Remember also the duty, the necessity, of educating the children of soldiers, who at present are perishing in the most deplorable manner, in the orphan-house of Potsdam, where more than four thousand are huddled together. Humanity implores your protection of these wretched victims, and provident policy, which but too loudly affirms how requisite a great army will long be to the Prussian states, will point out the real value of these children.

Men ought to be happy in your kingdom, SIRE ; grant them liberty to leave their country, when not legally detained by individual obligations. Grant this freedom by a formal edict. This, SIRE, is another of the eternal laws of equity, which the situation of the times demands should be put in execution ; which will do you infinite good, and which will not rob you of one enjoyment ; for your people can nowhere seek a better condition than that which it depends on you to afford them ; and could they be happy elsewhere they would not be detained by your prohibitions. Leave such laws to those Powers that have been

desirous to render provinces prisons, forgetting that this was but to make them hateful. The most tyrannical laws respecting emigration have only impelled the people to emigrate, against the very wish of Nature, and perhaps the most powerful of all wishes, which attaches man to his native soil. How does the Laplander cherish the desolate climate under which he is born ! And would the inhabitant of a kingdom enlightened by milder suns pronounce his own banishment, did not a tyrannical administration render the benefits of Nature useless or abhorred ? Far from dispersing men, a law of enfranchisement would but detain them in what they would then call their GOOD COUNTRY ; and which they would prefer to lands the most fertile ; for man will submit to everything that Providence imposes ; he only murmurs at injustice from man, to which if he does submit, it is with a rebellious heart. Man is not a tree rooted to the earth in which he grows ; therefore pertains not to the soil. He is neither field, meadow, nor brute ; therefore cannot be bought and sold. He has an interior conviction of these simple truths ; nor can he be persuaded that his

chiefs have any right to attach him to the glebe. All powers in vain unite to inculcate a doctrine so infamous. The time when the sovereign of the earth might conjure him in the name of God, if such a time ever existed, is past; the language of justice and reason is the only one to which he will at present listen. Princes cannot too often recollect that English America enjoins all governments to be just and sage, if governors do not wish to rule over deserts.

Abolish, SIRE, the *traites foraines*,<sup>1</sup> and the *droits d'aubaine*.<sup>2</sup> Of what benefit to you can such remains of feudal barbarism be? Do not wait for a system of reciprocity, which never has any other effect than that of longer detaining nations in a state of folly and warfare. That which is good for the prosperity of any country needs no reciprocity. Objections of this kind are but the foolish objections of vanity. Should the tyranny which is exercised over man and property in one state be to the loss of another, this is an

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<sup>1</sup> The twentieth, levied on all merchandise entering or leaving the kingdom.

<sup>2</sup> The seizure of the effects of foreigners who happen to die in the kingdom.

additional reason why the latter should put an end to such absurd customs. Similar absurdities, perhaps, have obliged its own subjects to seek their fortune elsewhere, and have even made them forbear to return and bring the fruits of their labours back to the country that gave them birth. As nothing is wanting but that someone should begin, how noble, how worthy is it of a great king to be the first! Your commercial subjects who are somewhat wealthy could not acquire their wealth at home, they were obliged to seek it in foreign countries; who therefore, SIRE, is more interested than you are to set the example of abolition, where to exact is so atrocious? Have England and Holland waited to renounce such rights till you should have renounced them in their behalf?

One of the most urgent changes which demands your attention, and which a word may accomplish, is a law to restore to the plebeians the liberty to purchase patrician lands, with all their annexed rights. The execution of the strange decree by which they were deprived of this liberty has been so iniquitously inflicted that, if a patrician estate

was sold for debt, and a plebeian was desirous of paying all the creditors, with an additional sum to the debtor; he was not allowed so to do, without an express order from the King. This order was generally refused by your predecessor; and the patrician by whom the creditors were defrauded, and the debtor kept without resource, had the preference. What was the consequence of this absurd law? The debasement of the price of land, that is to say, of the first riches of the State, and highly to the disadvantage of the noble landholders; the decay of agriculture, which was before discouraged by so many other causes, and of credit among the gentry; the aggravation of that fearful prejudice which wrongs the plebeian and renders the patrician stupid, by making him suppose his honourable rights are a sufficient source of respect, and that he need not acquire any other; in fine, the absolute necessity that those plebeians should quit the country who had acquired any capital; for they could not employ their money in trade, that being ruined by monopoly; nor in agriculture, because they were not allowed to hope they ever might be land-

holders.<sup>1</sup> Is not Mecklenburg full of the traders of Stettin and Königsberg, &c., who have employed the wealth they gained, during the last maritime war, in the purchase of the estates of the ruined nobility of that country? This, SIRE, would be a heavy loss to you, were Mecklenburg always to be separated from your kingdom; a loss beyond the powers of calculation, were the same regulations hereafter to subsist. It is a remark which could not escape sagacious travellers, that wealthy merchants have delighted, in retirement, to betake themselves to agriculture. The most barren land becomes fruitful in their possession. They labour for its improvement, and bear with them that spirit of order, that circumstantial precision, by which they grew rich in trade. Wherever merchants can purchase, and wherever trade is honourable, there the country flourishes, and wears the face of abundance and prosperity. Commercial industry awakens every other kind of industry, and the earth requires

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<sup>1</sup> *Bourgeoisie* and *Roturiers* are terms which are here translated by the word *plebeian*, and this word is meant to include all classes, whether of tradesmen, husbandmen or liberal professions, that do not appertain to the nobility.

that ingenious tillage which animates vegetation in the most ungrateful soil. Ah! SIRE, deign to recollect this tillage never was invented on patrician lands; for this we are indebted to those countries where illustrious birth vanishes when merit and talents appear.

Abolish, SIRE, those senseless prerogatives which bestow great offices on men who, to speak mildly, are not above mediocrity; and which are the cause that the greatest number of your subjects take no interest in a country where they have nothing to hope but fetters and humiliations. Beware, oh! beware, of that universal aristocracy which is the scourge of monarchical states, even more than of republics; an aristocracy by which, from one end of the earth to the other, the human species is oppressed. It is the interest of the most absolute monarch to promulgate the most popular maxims. The people do not dread and revile kings, but their ministers, their courtiers, their nobles; in a word, the aristocracy. "OH, DID THE KING BUT KNOW!"—Thus they exclaim.—They daily invoke the royal authority, and are always ready to arm it against aristocracy.

And whence is the power of the prince derived, but from the people ; his personal safety, but from the people ; his wealth and splendour, but from the people ; those benedictions which alone can make him more than mortal, but from the people ? And who are the enemies of the sovereign, but the grantees ; the members of the aristocracy, who require the king should be only THE FIRST AMONG EQUALS, and who, wherever they could, have left him no other pre-eminence than that of rank, reserving power to themselves ? By what strange error does it happen that kings debase their friends, whom they deliver up to their enemies ? It is the interest and the will of the people that the prince should never be deceived. The interest and the will of the nobility are the very reverse. The people are easily satisfied : they give and ask not. Only prevent indolent pride from bearing too heavy upon them ; leave but the career open which the supreme Being has pointed out to them at their birth, and they will not murmur. Where is the monarch who could ever satisfy the noble, the rich, the great ? Do they ever cease to ask ? Will they ever cease ?



SIRE, equality of rights among those who support the throne will form its firmest basis. Changes of this kind cannot be suddenly made; yet there is one of these which cannot be too suddenly: let no person who wishes to approach the throne, whatever may be his rank in life, be impeded by the prerogatives of the great. Let men feel the necessity of equal merit to obtain preference. It is for you to level distinctions, and seat merit in its proper place.

Declare open war on the prejudice which places so great a distance between military and civil functions. It is a prejudice which, under a feeble prince, such as your august family, like every other, may some time produce, will expose the country, and the crown itself, to all the convulsions of pretorian anarchy. The officer and the soldier, SIRE, should only be proud in the presence of the foe. To their countrymen they should be brothers; and, if they defend their fellow citizens, be it remembered they are paid by their fellow citizens. In a kingdom like yours, perhaps, the warrior ought to have the first degree of respect; but he ought not to have it

exclusively. If you have an army only you will never have a kingdom. Render your civil officers more respectable than they were under your predecessor. Nothing is more just, or more easy to accomplish. The prince who reigns over the affections engages them by the simplest attentions. Frederick II. had the frenzy of continually wearing a uniform, as if he were the king only of soldiers. This legionary habiliment did not a little contribute to discredit the civil officer. How happened it he never felt it was impossible a sovereign should render men estimable, for whom he never would testify esteem? He who attempts to make those incorruptible to whom he will not ascertain pecuniary independence will be equally unsuccessful. Let the civil officer be better paid, and never forget, SIRE, that ill-pay is ill-economy. Among a thousand examples, I will but cite the enormous frauds that the Prussian administrators have, for some years, committed on the public revenue. By an inconsistency, which is important in its effects, the financiers have been held in too much contempt, and those who have been convicted of acts the most dishonest have been too slightly

punished. Such partiality could only raise the indignation of the poor, and encourage the fraudulent, who soon learned that to bribe an accomplice was to diminish the danger.

Prompt and gratuitous justice is evidently the first of sovereign duties. If the judge have no interest to elude the law, and can receive only his salary, gratuitous justice is soon rendered, and will be equitable should your inspection be active and severe, and should you never forget that severity is the first duty of kings. This grand regulation of rendering justice entirely gratuitous will, fortunately, not become burdensome in your states, for your people are well inclined, and not addicted to litigious disputes. But, burdensome or not, that which is strict equity is always necessary. Justice, SIRE, precedes utility itself; or, rather, where justice is not, there is there no utility. The judge ought to be paid by the public, and not to receive fees. To deny this were absurd; for must not judges subsist, though there should not, for a whole year, be a single lawsuit?

Be you, SIRE, the first to render the administration of justice gratuitous.

Be you also the first in whose states all men who wish to labour shall find work. All who breathe ought to feed by labour. It is the first law of Nature, and prior to all human conventions. It is the bond of society. The government that should neglect to multiply the products of the earth, and that should not leave to each individual the use and profits of his industry, would be the accomplice or the author of all the crimes of men, and never could punish a culprit without committing a murder; for each man who offers labour in exchange for food, and meets refusal, is the natural and legitimate enemy of other men, and has a right to make war upon society.

• Everywhere, in country as well as in town, let houses of industry be kept open at the expense of government; that any man, of any country, may there gain his livelihood by his labour; and that your subjects there may be taught the value of time and industry.

Such institutions, SIRE, would be no burden; they would pay themselves. They would open a road to trade, facilitate the sale of natural

products, enrich your lands, and improve your finances.

Such, SIRE, are the institutions which become a great king; and not manufactures protected by exclusive privileges, which only can be supported by injustice and mountains of gold, and which do but contribute to enrich a very small number of men; or to endow hospitals, which, if there were no poor, would create paupers.

There are, alas! too many poor in Prussia, especially at Berlin, and the poverty of whom demands your attention. In your capital, it cannot be said without a painful emotion, a tenth of the inhabitants receives public alms; and this number annually augments. It is, no doubt, necessary to limit the extent of cities, where excessive population is productive of the worst consequences. In them not only poverty takes birth, but the worst of poverty, because it is not known how it may be remedied. The poor of cities are beings that have lost all good properties, moral and physical. But, speaking in general, the best opponent to this increasing poverty would be the houses of industry before mentioned, where

all men who have arms may labour; and not those useless trades which are wretched in their pomp, and serve but to encourage the luxury of splendour, which already eats up your kingdom; nor those hospitals, fruitful sources of depredation, of benefit only to their directors, which engulf sums so considerable; while your schools, especially those of the open country, are so neglected and so miserable that the salaries of some of the headmasters scarcely amount to fifteen crowns a year. Let your Majesty fit your subjects for labour by a proper mode of instruction, and they will have no need of hospitals.

You are not ignorant, SIRE, that to instruct is one of the most important duties of the sovereign, as it is one of his greatest sources of wealth. The most able man could do nothing without forming those who surround him, and whom he is obliged to employ; nor without teaching them his language, and familiarizing them with his ideas and his principles. The entire freedom of the Press, therefore, ought to be enumerated among your first regulations, not only because the deprivation of this freedom is a deprivation of

natural right, but because that all impediment to the progress of the human understanding is an evil, an excessive evil, and especially to yourself, who only can enjoy truth, and hear truth, from the Press, which should be the prime minister of good kings.

They will tell you, SIRE, that with respect to the freedom of the Press you can add nothing at Berlin. But to abolish the censorship, of itself so useless, and always so arbitrary, would be much. If the printer's name be inserted in the title-page it is enough, perhaps more than enough. The only specious objection against an unlimited freedom of the Press is the licentiousness of libels; but it is not perceived that the freedom of the Press would take away the danger, because that, under such a regulation, truth only would remain. The most scandalous libels have no power except in countries that are deprived of the freedom of the Press. Its restrictions form an illicit trade, which cannot be extirpated; yet they lay restraints on none but honest people. Let not, therefore, that absurd contrast be seen in Prussia, which absolutely forbids foreign books to be in-

spected, and subjects national publications to so severe an inquisition. Give freedom to all. Read, SIRE, and suffer others to read. Knowledge will everywhere expand, and will centre on the throne. Do you wish for darkness? Oh, no! Your mind is too great. Or, if you did, you would wish in vain, would act to your own injury, without obtaining the fatal success of extinguishing light. You will read, SIRE; you will begin a noble association with books; books that have destroyed shameful and cruel prejudices; that have smoothed your paths; that were beneficial to you previous even to your birth. You will not be ungrateful toward the accumulated labours of beneficent genius. You will read; you will protect those who write; for without them what were, what should be, the human species? They will instruct, will aid you, will speak to you unseen, without approaching your throne; will introduce august Truth to your presence, who shall enter your palace unescorted, unattended; and, having entered, she will ask no dignities, no titles, but will remain invisible and disinterested. You will read; but you would wish your people should read also.



You will not think you have done enough by filling your academies with foreigners. You will found schools, especially in the country, and will multiply and endow them. You will not wish to reign in darkness. Say but, "Let there be light," and light shall appear at your bidding; while her divine beams shall shine more resplendent round your head than all the laurels of heroes and conquerors.

There is a devouring plague in your states, SIRE, which you cannot too suddenly extirpate; and no doubt this good deed will nobly signalize the first day of your accession to the throne. I speak of the lottery, which would but be the more odious and more formidable did it procure you the wealth of worlds; but which, for the wretched gain of fifty thousand crowns, hurries the industrious part of your subjects into all the calamities of poverty and vice.

You will be told, SIRE, what some pretended statesmen have not blushed to write, and publish, that the lottery ought to be regarded as a voluntary tax.—A tax?—And what a tax! One whose whole products are founded either on delirium or

despair. What a tax! To which the rich landholder is not obliged to contribute. A tax which neither wise nor good men ever pay.—A voluntary tax?—Strange indeed is this kind of freedom! Each day, each minute, the people are told it depends only on themselves to become rich for a trifle: thousands may be gained by a shilling. So the wretch believes who cannot calculate, and who is in want of bread; and the sacrifice he makes of that poor remaining shilling which was to purchase bread, and appease the cries of his family, is a free gift!—a tax, which he pays to his sovereign!

You will be further told—yes, men will dare to tell you—that this horrible invention, which empoisons even hope itself, the last of the comforts of man, is indeed an evil; but that it were better you should yourself collect the harvest of the lottery than abandon your subjects to foreign lotteries.—Oh! SIRE, cast arithmetic so corrupt, and sophisms so detestable, with horror from you. There continually are means of opposing foreign lotteries. Secret collectors are not to be feared. They will not penetrate far into your states when

the pains and penalties are made severe; and in such instances only are informers encouraged without inconvenience, for they only inform against an ambulatory pestilence. The natural penalties against such as favour adventurers in foreign lotteries are: infamy, an exclusion from municipal offices, from trading companies, and from the right of coming on 'change. These penalties are very severe, and no doubt sufficient; yet if violent remedies are necessary to impede the progress of such a crime, the punishment of death, that punishment at which my mind revolts and my blood is frozen, that punishment so prodigally bestowed on so many crimes, and which perhaps no crime can merit, would be rendered more excusable from the fearful list of wretchedness and disorder, which originate in lotteries, than even from the most exaggerated consequences of domestic theft.

But, SIRE, the great, first, and immediate operation which I supplicate from YOUR MAJESTY, in the name of your dearest interest and glory, is a quick and formal declaration, accompanied with all the awful characteristics of sovereignty,

that unlimited toleration shall prevail through your states, and that they shall ever remain open to all religions. You have a very natural, and not less estimable, opportunity of making such a declaration. Publish an edict which shall grant civil liberty to the Jews. This act of beneficence, at the very commencement of your reign, will make you surpass your illustrious predecessor in religious toleration, who was the most tolerant prince that ever existed. Nor shall this excess of beneficence be without its reward. Exclusive of the numerous increase to population, and the large capitals which Prussia will infallibly acquire, at the expense of other countries, the Jews of the second generation will become good and useful citizens. To effect this they need but be encouraged in the mechanic arts and agriculture, which to them are interdicted. Free them from those additional taxes by which they are oppressed. Give them access to the courts of justice equal to your other subjects, by depriving their Rabbis of all civil authority.—Oh! SIRE, I conjure you, beware of delaying the declaration of the most universal tolerance. There are fears in your

provinces of rather losing than gaining in this respect. Apprehensions are entertained concerning what are called your prejudices, your preconceived opinions, your doctrine. This perhaps is the only part in which you have been seriously attacked by calumny. Solemnly prove the falsehood of those who have affirmed you are intolerant. Show them that your respect for religious opinions equals your respect for the great Creator, and that you are far from desiring to prescribe laws concerning the manner in which He ought to be adored. Prove that, be your philosophic or religious opinions what they may, you make no pretensions to the absurd and tyrannical right of imposing opinions upon others.

After these preliminary acts, which, I cannot too often repeat, may as well be performed in an hour as in a year, and which consequently ought to be performed immediately, a glance on the economical and political system by which your kingdom is regulated, will lead you to other considerations.

It is a most remarkable thing that a man like your predecessor, distinguished for the ex-

treme justness of his understanding, should have embraced an economical and political system so radically vicious.—Indirect taxes, extravagant prohibitions, regulations of every kind, exclusive privileges, monopolies without number!—Such was the spirit of his domestic government, and to a degree that, besides being odious, was most ridiculous.

Is it not astonishing, for example, that a man like Frederick II. could waste his time in regulating, in such a city as Berlin, the rates that should be paid at inns; the pay of *laquais de louage*<sup>1</sup>, and the value of all the necessaries of life; or that ever he should conceive the project of prohibiting the entrance of French apples into the march of Brandenburg, which is only productive of woods and sands? As if the apples of his provinces were in dread of rivals! Thus too he asked, when he prohibited the eggs that were brought from Saxony, “Cannot my hens lay eggs?”—Could he forget that the eggs of the hens of Berlin must first be eaten before

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1 Footmen that are hired by the day, for the convenience of strangers.

the inhabitants would send as far as Dresden for others? His prohibition, too, of the mouse-traps of Brunswick! As if the man had ever before been born who founded his hopes of fortune on a speculation in mouse-traps! It would be endless to collect all his singularities of this kind. Who can reflect, without pain and pity, that four hundred and twelve monopolies exist in your kingdom? So interwoven was this equally absurd and iniquitous system with the spirit of the government of Frederick II. Or that a great number of these monopolies are still active; at least that the prohibitive ordinances are effective, which bestowed such exclusive privileges on persons many of whom have since been ruined, and have become bankrupts or outlaws? Or that, in fine, the number of prohibited commodities greatly exceeds that of commodities that are permitted? These things would appear incredible to men even most accustomed to indulge the regulatory and fiscal delirium. Yet thus low could even a great man sink, who was desirous of governing too much.

Is it not equally astonishing that a Monarch

so active, so industrious, in his royal functions should leave the system of direct taxation exactly in the state in which it was under Frederick I., when the clergy were taxed at a fiftieth of their income, the nobility at the thirty-third, and the people at the seventeenth; a burden at that time excessive, but which, by the different variations in value and the signs of property, is almost reduced to nothing? So that industry and trade have been most unmercifully oppressed by your predecessor, at the very time that he was establishing manufactures at an excessive expense.

How might this same King, so consistent and pertinacious in what he had once ordained, at the time that he settled new colonies by granting them franchises and the right of property, the necessity of which to agriculture he consequently knew, suffer the absurd regulation to subsist which excludes all right of property in the greatest part of his kingdom? How was it that he did not feel that, instead of expending sums so vast in forming colonies, he would much more rapidly have augmented his revenues and



the population of his provinces, by enfranchising those unfortunate beasts of burden who, under the human form, cultivate the earth, by distributing among them the extensive tracts called domains (which absorb almost the half of your estates) in proprietaries, and on condition of paying certain hereditary quit-rents in kind?

All these particulars, and a thousand others of a like kind, are strange, no doubt; yet it is not totally impossible to explain such eccentricities of mind in a great man. Without entering here into a particular enquiry concerning that quality of mind whence it resulted that Frederick II. was much rather a singular example of the development of great character, in its proper place, than of an elevated genius, bestowed by Nature, and superior to other men, it is easy to perceive that, having applied the whole power of his abilities to form a grand military force, with provinces that were disunited, parcelled out and generally unfruitful; and, for that purpose, wishing to outstrip the slow march of Nature, he principally thought of money, because money was the only engine of speed. Hence originated with him his idolatry

of money; his love of amassing, realizing, and heaping. Those fiscal systems which most effectually stripped the people of their metal were those in which he most delighted. Every artifice, every fiscal extortion, that has taken birth in kingdoms the most luxurious, which, unfortunately, in this as in other things, gave the fashion to Europe, were by turns naturalized in his states. Frederick II. was the more easily led to pursue this purpose, because such was the situation of some of his provinces that they were almost necessarily a market for the products of Saxony, Poland, &c., and thus the multiplicity and severity of his duties were less rapidly destructive of the revenue arising from the tolls. Besides that, his nation, but little active, and still, perhaps, tainted by that Germanic improvidence which neglects or disdains to save, did not afford him any other immediate resource than what might be found in the royal treasury. He imagined the Prussians were in need of being goaded by additions, which, however, could only tend to slacken their pace. He supposed they might be taught wisdom by monopolies; as if monopolies were not

injurious to the progress of knowledge. Having taken his first steps, his unconquerable spirit of consistency, which was his distinguishing characteristic; the multitude of his affairs, which obliged him to leave whatever did not appertain to the military system on the same basis, and with similar institutions, in which he found it; his habit of not suffering contradiction nor discussion; his extreme contempt for mankind, which perhaps will explain all his success, all his errors, all his conduct; his confidence in his own superiority, which confirmed him in the fatal resolution of seeing all, of all regulating, all ordaining, and personally interfering in all—these various causes combined have rendered fiscal robbery, and systematic monopoly, irrefragable and sacred in his kingdom; while they were daily aggravated by his despotic temper and the moroseness of age.

Evils so various and so great had indeed some compensations. To his numerous taxes Frederick II. joined a rigorous economy. He raised heavy contributions on his enemies. His first wars were paid by their money. He conquered a rich province, where great and wealthy

industry, produced no doubt by a government more sage than his, had previously been established. He drew subsidies from his allies; the folly of granting which is no longer in fashion. During four-and-twenty years of peace, he enjoyed a degree of respect which rather resembled worship than dread. He continually reserved, in his states, some part of the money he extorted. His new military discipline, a species of industry of which he was the creator, not a little contributed to his puissance; and his wealth, in the midst of indebted Europe, would have been almost sufficient for all his wishes; for, had the ardour of his ambition longer continued, what he could not have conquered he would have bought. Who, indeed, can say whether Frederick II. was not indebted, for a great part of his domestic success, to the deplorable state of the human species in Germany; through most of the states of which, if we except Saxony, the inhabitants were still more wretched than in Prussia?

Yet, SIRE, with efforts so multiplied, what is the inheritance that has been left you by this great King? Are your provinces rich, powerful

and happy? Deprive them of their military renown and the resources of the royal treasury, which soon may vanish, and feeble will be the remainder. Had the provinces of which your kingdom is composed been under a paternal government, and peopled by freemen, the acquisition of Silesia might have been more distant; but how different would have been the present state and wealth of the whole remaining nation!

Your situation, SIRE, is entirely different from that of your predecessor. The destructive resources of fiscal regulation are exhausted. A change of system, is, for this reason, indispensable. An army cannot always, cannot long, constitute the basis of the Prussian puissance. Your army must, therefore, be supported by all the internal aids which good administration can employ, built on permanent foundations. It is necessary that you should truly animate the national industry, in ably profiting by those extraordinary and perishable means which have been transmitted to you by your predecessor. These, it is to be presumed, you may long enjoy. It is not, therefore, absurd to advise you to sow in order that you may

reap. Should momentary sacrifices, however great, be necessary to render the Prussian states (which hitherto have only constituted a vast and formidable camp) a stable and prosperous monarchy, founded on freedom and property, the immensity of your treasure will render such sacrifices infinitely less burdensome to you than they would be to any other sovereign, and the barter will be prodigiously to your advantage, even should the rendering of men happy be estimated at nothing.

The basis of the system which it is your duty, SIRE, to form must rest on the just ideas which you shall obtain of the true value of money, which is but a trifling part of national wealth, and of much less importance than the riches which annually spring from the bosom of the earth. The incorruptibility and the scarcity of gold have rendered it a pledge, and a mode of exchange, between man and man; and this general use is the chief source of the deceitful opinions that are entertained of its value. The facility with which it may be removed, when men are obliged to fly, especially from places where

tyranny is to be dreaded, has given every individual a desire of amassing gold; and the false opinions concerning that metal have been strengthened by this universal desire.

No less true is it that, gold being an engine or agent in trade, and that the multiplicity of agents is the increase of trade,<sup>1</sup> and still further that the increase of trade is the prosperity of nations, to imprison gold, or to act so as to oblige others to imprison it, is madness. What would you say of a prince who, desiring to become a conqueror, should keep his army shut up in barracks? Yet kings who amass gold act precisely thus. They render that lifeless which is of no value except when in motion.

But just ideas concerning the value of gold are necessarily connected with those of the government that shall respect property, and shall pursue principles of rigorous justice; such as shall inspire unshaken confidence, and render to each individual the most perfect security; for, without this, the true use of gold is traversed by innumerable

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<sup>1</sup> The whole reasoning here, and, indeed, through the greatest part of the Memorial, is taken from that almost inestimably valuable work, Smith's "Wealth of Nations."

accidents, that deprive it of the utility which would otherwise render national industry so fruitful.

Whatever you may do, SIRE, to inspire confidence, it still remains for you to observe that nations have commercial connections; and that gold forms one of those, because of its necessity to trade. It must flow here or there, according to the indefinite combinations of merchants. Hence no nation can unite sound opinions concerning trade with restraint on the exportation of gold. Each man must finally pay his debts, and no person gives or receives gold, from which little is to be gained, except when every means of paying in merchandise is exhausted; for from these profits are derived to buyer and seller. What would you think, SIRE, of a prince who should encourage the merchants of his kingdom to establish numerous manufactures, consequently to employ numerous agents, yet should forbid those agents to leave the kingdom that they might purchase the materials of which the manufacturers stand in need? This, however, is the picture of the prince who should prevent, or lay



restraint on, the exportation of gold: such would his frenzy be. But in what does this frenzy originate? In his fear that the gold will never come back. And wherefore? Because he secretly feels that his subjects are not perfectly secure of their property.—Thus, SIRE, you perceive justice, security, respect for men, and a declaration of war against all tyranny, are indispensable conditions to every plan of prosperity.

When your subjects shall be at ease in this respect, entertain no apprehensions should gold seem to vanish: it is but gone in search of gold, and to return with increase. Forget not, SIRE, that the value of gold is lost, irretrievably, when it is not absolutely subjected to the will of trade, which alone is its monarch. By trade I here understand the general action of all productive industry, from the husbandman to the artist.

What has been done in kingdoms where the security of the citizen is perfect, and where men have been convinced that gold never can be fixed, nor acquired in sufficient abundance for the supply of exchange? Why, in such kingdoms, banks have been imagined, and bills have been brought

into circulation, which, from the conviction that they may at any time be turned into specie, have become a kind of coin, which not being universal has been an internal substitute for gold, and induced men not to disturb themselves concerning its external circulation.

Of such establishments you, SIRE, should be ambitious. Happy the state in which the sovereign, having habituated his subjects to the opinion of perfect internal security, can cause sufficient sums to issue from his treasury for the establishment of such banks, to his own advantage.<sup>1</sup> How many fiscal inventions, produced by the spirit of pilfering, under the protection of ignorance and the laws, how many absurd and tyrannical taxes might be annihilated, by gaining the interest of that money of which this con-

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1 Notwithstanding the general excellence of the counsel given in this Memorial, there seems to be a mixture of cunning in the present advice, of which perhaps the Author was not conscious. But the preceding letters prove that he himself was addicted to speculations in stock-jobbing; and, still more, that he wished to procure loans from Prussia to supply the immediate necessities of France, and of his friend de Calonne. The advice, however, might be, and, probably was, good.

fidential currency should be the representative! And what tax ever could be more mild, more natural, more productive, or more agreeable to the monarch, than the interest of money which he may gain by a currency which costs him nothing? Such a tax is cheerfully paid, for industry is the borrower; and, wherever industry finds its reward, each individual wishes to be industrious.

The outline I have here traced, and which you, SIRE, may strengthen by so many circumstances of which I am ignorant, and by so many others that would be too tedious to recapitulate at present, will naturally lead you—

I. To the distribution of your immense domains among husbandmen, whom you will supply with the sums they want, and who will become real landholders, that shall pay a perpetual quit-rent in kind, in order that your revenues may augment in proportion to the augmentation of wealth.

II. To the due lowering (till such time as they may be wholly abolished) of indirect taxes, excise duties, customs, &c., the product of which

will continually increase in an inverse ratio to the quantity of the duty and the vigour with which it is collected; for illicit trade, excited by too tempting lures, gains protectors among those by whom it ought to be repressed and agents who had been appointed its opponents. Such disastrous taxes might likewise find substitutes in the natural and just increase of direct taxes; as on land, from which no estate ought to be free; for land finally bears the whole burden of taxation, which burden is the heavier the more the means of laying it on are indirect. How many disputes, shackles, inquisitions and disorders would then vanish! Plagues which are more odious, more oppressive, than the burden of the tax itself; and even more intolerable from the mode of assessment than from the value! That artificial vice which, before the last reign, was unknown in your kingdom, the vice of illicit trade, which makes deceit the basis of commerce, depraves the manners, and inspires a general contempt for the laws, then would disappear. To the regions of hell itself would then be banished the infernal power which your predecessor conferred on the

administrators of excise duties and tolls, of arbitrarily increasing the penalties and punishments inflicted on smugglers.

III. You will firmly and invariably determine on the system of favouring, by every possible means, the *transit trade*,<sup>1</sup> which must find new roads should foreigners longer be vexed; or rather, has already found new roads. The impositions and minute examinations, which are occasioned by the manner of levying duties on this trade, and the fatal vigilance that has been employed not to suffer contraband goods to find entrance at the fair of Frankfort on the Oder, has produced this fatal effect, that the Poles, who formerly carried on a very considerable trade at Frankfort and at Breslau, at present totally avoid both places, and condemn themselves to a circuit of near a hundred German miles<sup>2</sup> through a great part of Poland, Moravia, and Bohemia, that they may arrive at Leipsic; for which reason this last city, which is much less favourably situated than

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<sup>1</sup> The passage of foreign goods through the Prussian states into other countries.

<sup>2</sup> The German mile is irregular. It contains from four to five, six, seven, and even more miles English.

Frankfort on the Oder, where there is a great river, has within these fifteen years become flourishing; while the former, from the same cause, has fallen to decay: which decay continues increasing, and that at the very moment when the revolution in America threatens the North with so powerful a rivalship. Profit, SIRE, by the last stage in which, perhaps, the transit trade can be an object of any importance. Favour it by taking off the chief of the duties which shackle it at present, and impart a confidence befitting of your candour and generous benevolence. How might you find a more fortunate moment in which to manifest such intentions than that wherein your neighbours are signalizing themselves by so many prohibitive frenzies?

IV. To you, SIRE, is reserved the real and singular honour of abolishing monopolies, which are no less injurious to good sense than to equity; and which, in your kingdom, are so perpetual a source of hatred and malediction. The Prussian merchants, incited by the example of monopolizing companies (Nature, desirous of preserving the human race, ever causes evil itself to produce

good), and, thanks to the excellent situation of your states, have made some progress, in despite of every effort to stifle their industry, on the first ray of hope that monopolies should disappear; and these merchants will, by voluntary contributions, afford a substitute for a part of the deficiency which the new system may at first occasion in your revenues.

V. You will, finally, arrive at the greatest of benefits, and at the most useful of speculations in politics and finance. You will set industry, arts, manufactures, and commerce free; commerce which only can exist under the protection of freedom; commerce, which prefers no request to kings except not to do it an injury. When you shall seriously have examined whether those manufactures which never can support a foreign rivalry, deserve to be encouraged at an expense so heavy, prohibitions will then presently vanish from your states. The linens of Silesia never were otherwise favoured than by exempting the weavers from military enrolment; and, of all the objects of Prussian trade, these linens are the most important. In none of your provinces are

any manufactures to be found more flourishing than in that of Westphalia ; namely, in the county of Marck ; yet never has government done anything to encourage the industry of this province, except in not inflicting internal vexations. I repeat, internal, for all the products of the industry of Prussian subjects, beyond the Weser, are accounted foreign and contraband, in all the other provinces ; which odious and absurd iniquity you will not suffer to subsist. You will enfranchise all, SIRE, and will grant no more exclusive privileges. Those who demand them are generally either knaves or fools ; and to acquiesce in their requests is the surest method of strangling industry. If such are found in England, it is because the form in which they are granted renders them almost null. In Ireland they are no longer admitted. The Government and the Dublin Society afford support and give bounties, but on condition that no exclusive privilege is asked. The most magnificent, as well as the most certain, means of possessing everything Nature bestows is freedom, SIRE. It is the prodigality with which she bestows that attracts men, by moral



feeling and physical good. All exclusive grants wound the first, and banish the second.

I entreat, SIRE, you would remark that I do not propose you should suddenly, and incautiously, lop away all the parasite suckers which disfigure and enfeeble the royal stock which you were born to embellish and strengthen ; but I likewise conjure you not to be impeded by the fear of meeting your collectors with empty hands ; for this fear, being solely occupied concerning self, they will not fail to increase. The only man among them who really possesses an extensive knowledge of the general connections of commerce, and from whom you may expect able services, whenever your system shall invariably be directed to obtain other purposes than those to which his talents have hitherto been prostituted, STRUENSEE, will confirm all my principles. He will indicate various means to your Majesty, which may serve as substitutes to fiscal extortions. Thus, for instance, the commutation of duties, which is a new art, may, under the direction of a man so enlightened, greatly increase your revenues by lightening the public burden.

England, formed to afford lessons to the whole earth, and to astonish the human mind by demonstrating the infinite resources of credit, in support of which everything is made to concur—England has lately made a fine and fortunate experiment of this kind. She has commuted the duties on tea by a tax on windows, and the success is wonderful.<sup>1</sup> Acquire a clear knowledge of this operation, SIRE. It is preserved, with all the effects it has produced, in a work which will open vast prospects to your view. Your generalizing mind will take confidence in the industry of the honest man, and in the resources of his sensibility, aided by experience and talents; though the misfortune of heavy taxes and the vicious mode of assessment should necessarily be prolonged.

But, SIRE, were you obliged to accept that heavy interest which Powers in debt are obliged to pay, as a substitute for duties that, though destructive, are not commutable, where would be the misfortune? What advantage might not result from treasures employed to obtain the payment of interest by which monarchies the most formidable

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1 Wonderful, indeed!

are enfeebled? Wherefore not seize the means which they themselves furnish at their own expense, no longer to stand in awe of them? Do not you perceive, SIRE, that you would thus without danger make them pay you tribute? For the governments which might be mad enough to wish to rob their creditors would be unable, thanks to the general intercourse of trade.

It remains to enquire to whom you would confide labours so difficult, yet so interesting. It is not for a stranger to estimate the worth of your subjects. Yet, SIRE, is there one whose talents are esteemed in France and England, and him, therefore, I may venture to name. Baron Knyphausen is well acquainted with men and things, in those countries in which he has served, and particularly with the system of the public funds.

But more especially, SIRE, summon the merchants. Among them are most commonly found probity and abilities. From them is derived the theory of order; and without order what can be accomplished? They are in general men of moderation, divested of pomp, and for that reason

merit preference. Be persuaded, SIRE, that the most enlightened, the most wise, and the most humane of mankind, would depart from you were their reward to consist in the vain decorations which titles bestow. These cannot be accepted without trampling on principles to which men are indebted for the glory of having merited reward; nor without paying with contempt the class they honour. The merchant who is worthy of your confidence will dread making himself guilty of such ingratitude towards his equals; and this is one of the characteristics by which he will be distinguished. In the title of Lord Chatham the great Pitt expired; nor did the Lord ever console himself for having acted thus traitorously towards his own glory. The services of the merchants you may employ, far from multiplying, must destroy the monstrous inequalities which disorganize and deform your states. Thus will men like these find their reward, and not in silly titles, or the vain decorations of nobility.

But, SIRE, I have too long intruded upon the precious moments in which the sceptre has so lately been confided to your hands. What can I

add which your own reflections, increased by facts that daily must fall under your notice, will not convey a thousand times more forcibly than any words of mine can? I have imagined it might not be wholly fruitless to awaken these ideas at the moment of a change so new, under a variety of affairs so great, and a multitude of interests and intrigues which must traverse and combat each other round your throne, and which may deprive you of that calm of mind that is necessary to abstract and to select. Should you in any degree be affected by my frankness, I dare hope it will not be unpleasantly. Meditate, O FREDERICK! on this free, sincere, but respectful remonstrance, and deign to say—

“Here I find what no man has informed me of, and perhaps the reverse of what I shall be daily told. The most courageous present truth to kings under a veil; I here behold her naked.—This is more worthy of me than the venal incense of rhymers, with which I am suffocated; or academical panegyrics, which assaulted me in the cradle, and scarcely will quit me in the coffin. I was a man before I was a King. Wherefore

take offence at being treated like a man ; because a stranger, who asks nothing from me, who soon will quit my Court, never to find it more, speaks to me without disguise ? I lay before me what inspection, experience, judgment, and understanding have collected. He gives me that true and liberal advice of which no man stands so much in need as he who is devoted to the public good. Interest to me he has none ; his intentions cannot be mistaken.—Let me attentively examine what he has proposed ; for the simple good sense, the native candour of the man, whose only employment is the cultivation of reason and reflection, may well be of equal value with the old routine of habit, ceremony, forms, diplomatic chimeras, and the ridiculous dogmas of those who are statesmen by profession.”

May the eternal Disposer of human events bestow health over your welfare ; may your days be benevolent and active ; employed in those consolatory pleasures which elevate and fortify the soul ; and may you till the extremest old age, enjoy the pure satisfaction of having employed your whole faculties

for the prosperity of the people for whose happiness you are responsible, for to you their happiness is entrusted!

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